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By JAMES STARK, D.D.

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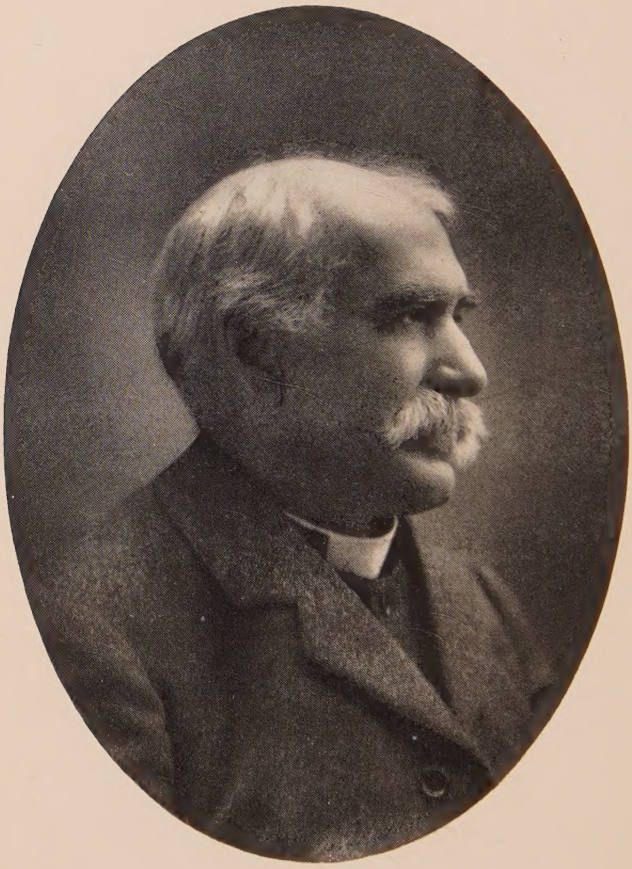

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MET BY THE WAY

BY

JAMES STARK, D.D.

Author of "John Murker of Banff," "Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen," "Comradeship in Sorrow," "Priest Gordon," "Lord Cullen," etc.

"I am a companion of all them that fear Thee"—
Psalm cxix., 63

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1915

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California

To My Wife

WHOSE SYMPATHY AND CO-OPERATION HAVE
NEVER BEEN LACKING IN THIS
LABOUR OF LOVE

PREFACE

THE celebration of my Jubilee last year, and the kindness shown to me by many friends on that occasion, partly explain the origin of this book.

With the exception of a few chapters, it consists of a progressive series of brief sketches, "snap-shots" of persons to whom I came up as I went on in life, and who have now finished their earthly course.

The book derives any value it has chiefly from the fact that it is almost entirely the outcome of contact, in some form or another, with the persons named, and is real matter-of-fact witness-bearing, so far as it goes. I tell of personal touches, which, when real, always count for something.

Is it not some little service rendered to that part of the world to which I belong, to be able to give at first-hand a few facts, however slight, if characteristic, relating to men of outstanding excellency and inspiring example, whom their survivors desire to remember and follow? I bring my contribution of selections from the hoarded memories of a long life; and, as far as space would allow, keeping back little, save what belongs to the inner sanctuary of earth's relationships.

The recollections and impressions of good men that were floating in my brain, and which I, as it were, in the

Providence of God, received on trust, are now in the custody of print; and I have the sweet satisfaction of knowing that when my tongue too is silenced, and my pen laid aside, the tributes I delighted to pay in my little circle will be more than a passing breath. What is "written" so far "remains," and this will do so here and there, for a time, as it finds its place and company.

J. S.

Braes o' Benachie,
March 15, 1915.

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KIRKCALDY

I

MY GRANDMOTHER'S GARDEN

THE heart has its treasure, the imagination its transcendent glory, the life its vision or dream of an ideal state where care is unknown, and joy has taken up its abode. What Arcadia and the Isles of the Blest were to the worthies of classic times, that strip of ground between the links of Kirkcaldy and its wide-stretching sea-shore was to my ingenuous mind, when I was beginning to be observant and to translate the wonders all around into forms which memory would retain, and with which life could forever be regaled.

Yea, my surpassing thing was far superior to what enchanted those ancients. What they saw in the childhood of the world was but the splendour of an illusion, a myth, a utopia, a creation of the fancy; but the thing in which I delighted was a real concrete thing, a solid bit of the earth, geographically located, bounded with walls, fronted by the old-fashioned red-tiled house in which my mother's mother lived (next door to Ninian Lockhart's was the address), and before which the mail coach, with its four horses, went every day at a rattling pace as it passed from Queensferry to the north.

I was sent to my grandmother every summer when set free from school in the city of my abode, that I

might truly be at home and know the blessedness of life. No parents could have been kinder and more conscientious than mine; but I hated the city, where I felt as if in prison—like a bird in a cage or a fish out of water. I had got glimpses of God's great world of nature, which He had intended for man—its green fields and smokeless skies, its wayside flowers, and trees, and hills, the music of its birds and streams, and the majesty of its sea; and I must own that instead of being thankful for my civic privileges and exulting in my chains, I felt that I had been wrongfully shut out of an estate which belonged to me and to every child of Adam, as much as this kingdom belonged to our good Queen Victoria.

The prospect of my annual and prolonged visit to the "lang toun," where I was under the guardianship of my *douce* Seceder grandmother, enabled me to bear with some degree of equanimity the city environment for the rest of the year. There was a member of my church in Aberdeen who made his living by brass-founding, but he had a strong literary bent, and he was accustomed to say that every day he really began to live only at half-past six in the evening, when he exchanged the mould for the desk; and my existence was quickened into life, throbbing in responsiveness to all my surroundings, when my foot stood inside my paradise in Fife. Adam could scarcely have been more disconsolate when expelled from Eden, than I was upon my enforced departure. I remember on one occasion going down to the seashore on the day before I left for the city, and having a quiet *greet*.

But what was there so remarkable in this piece of ground, that to be on it had such an effect upon my feeling? You would laugh if I were to give a minute and realistic

description of the place that was the scene of so much pleasure and inspiration. What was it? It was a bit of nature, and that is an original and divine thing. Touch life at any point and how interesting it is—if it be real life and not a mere simulacrum. I think it is Emerson who says we make too much of local and what we call striking scenery. Is not any bit of God's earth, with its commonest features uncontaminated, a thing of beauty and pleasure? Open the gates and let a child into the country anywhere, and the little one soon finds its paradise. The wind rustling among the leaves brings music out of the trees and bushes of a cottage garden, just as if they were in the stately domain of a gentleman's seat such as the *Raith*, which is the glory of Kirkcaldy. When you have a grip of reality fortified by a contented mind, it is wonderful how much of the wind of restless vanity and fictitious greatness may blow past you without ever being noticed.

But while all that is true, I hold that this garden I am attempting to describe was in itself exceptionally interesting to me. It was like no other I ever saw. The nearest approach to it was John Murker's. But with all deference to our hero of Banff, my grandmother displayed—shall I say it?—more order and taste in laying out her little estate.

At the end nearest the house there was as much attention devoted to the useful side of life as could be desired. Potatoes, cabbages, peas, turnips—and oh! what carrots, grown on soil not far removed from the sea-shore. But the glory of the kitchen part of the garden—in my eyes—was the beans. I was kept apprised, for weeks before I left school, of the progress they were making in "filling." What prince at a feast ever enjoyed a favourite dish more than I did my beans?

But we did not neglect the finer, the aesthetic side of life. We were practical, but not utilitarian. At the farther end was the flower garden, and I say it without exaggeration, that at mid-summer or a little later it was a scene of dazzling exuberance which saluted every sense with pleasure, the purest which the earth can afford. Roses abounded, red and white. The Scotch rose has been my favourite since those halcyon days. Most of our flowers had fragrance. Mint, balm, and southernwood, which we associate with Scotch folk and church-going, were fully represented. Why are such old-fashioned plants so much discarded in modern gardens? Is not fashion sometimes a tyrant, and a senseless one? But my grandmother's particular favourite was thyme. She was quite a connoisseur in thyme and had a great many varieties. One of the tests which I apply to a garden that professes to be well stocked is—has it silver thyme? The sea-daisies I still see on the borders, and as for the sweet-brier—the poets' eglantine—don't I smell it yet after a shower! There was always, too, the peony-rose, giving an impressive show of colour, to keep its rather modest companions, on the border, in countenance. We had medicinal herbs also, and they were not far from the roses. At the very end of the garden, close to the wall, on the left-hand side, was a summer-seat built with stone and covered with earth on which grew camomile flowers. I do not remember ever sitting upon it, but I suppose I must have imbibed decoctions of that which came from it.

After what I have said about the aesthetic character of the sea-ward end of this historic garden, I am almost afraid to complete the picture, by telling what was on the right-hand corner opposite the healing camomile. But em-

boldened by the reflection that there is nothing perfect under the sun, and that by searching diligently you usually discover some incongruous element in the most resplendent unity, I muster courage to say—it was our pig's sty !

Carlyle, when entertaining Emerson at Craigenputtock, drew special attention to the pig that was kept, and professed to admire it "hugely." I confess also that our pig was to me an object of daily interest, almost as much as the beans and gooseberries. There were ulterior reasons for its existence which were hidden from me at the time ; and the pig was to me only a fellow-creature upon which sympathy and kindness could be appreciatively expended ; but events developed usually before I returned to the desolation of the town, which, while giving variety to our diet, also revealed what a strange mixture of a thing is life in this world.

But that sty was useful to me as well as to the pig. The roof of it gave me a higher level on which to stand in viewing the world. One of the great pleasures of life is extension of outlook, which even a child can enjoy. Restless and crying, you can pacify the youngest by holding him up to look at something that is novel. There is education to older persons in a height that is ascended, besides the geographical knowledge that is gained.

One day when I was mounted on my watch-tower, surveying the scene far and near, getting glimpses of my beloved sea which was usually within hearing, as well as partially within sight, a new figure of interest came tripping along the garden on the other side of our wall. I had no society of my own age, and it was an unlooked for accession to my happiness when one of the children of my grandmother's neighbour came within speaking distance. There is a free-masonry in childhood, the secret and the privileges

of which are lost when the earlier stage of life is passed; and we were soon in the thick of conversation, she on the garden walk beyond, and I on the top of the pig's sty, the ground of my elevation being invisible to the beholder.

In exchanging ideas about the respective bits of the world in which we found ourselves placed, it came out that her garden had some things which mine did not possess While she had no camomile, there was abundance of apples and pears. She rather pitied me on the absence of such fruit in my part of the world, and wanted to hand me some; but the wall was too high for her benevolent intentions to be carried out.

My brain, stimulated by society and doubtless also by the prospect of what was before me, suggested the use of a string, which I kept in my pocket as a boy's chief resource in my various adventures on sea and land. I tied it to my cap, and, as an extemporised basket, lowered it on the other side of the wall. It was soon filled with the fruit so pleasant to the eye, and I was in the act of hoisting it up, when, my grandmother spying what was going on, there came a thundering knock from the window, which had a startling effect. The little fairy vanished from the scene, and my romance was closed!

II

THE KIRKCALDY SANDS

I HAVE indicated that the sea was quite near—little more than a stone-throw from my grandmother's garden. Being so near I could no more keep from it, when I wanted a change, than the magnet from the loadstone. I sometimes think, as I look back upon it all, that I was favoured above measure in having both garden and sea as my summer environment, for the one without the other would surely have been enough to fill the eye and desire of any reasonable child.

It is not difficult to explain how the sea should captivate a child. How could it fail to do so, seeing that a child sees the greatness of some great objects better than the ordinary grown-up person. A child has so much unexhausted capacity for wonder, and there is so much occasion for it in the great and wide sea, with its tides and storms, its mysterious depths and unexplored resources, and its ships sailing to and fro. The sea is so big, so majestic, and yet often so playful. One day it comes as a monster with a terrible roar and a wrathful countenance, dashing upon the rocks and pounding the sandy shore with its big billows. Next day its mood is entirely changed, and with gentle murmuring wavelets it caresses the land, and is the sweetest of all companions, running in and out, as if taking part in a child's game.

What a strange thing is the sea to one who is not

familiar with it! As soon as you turn your face to it you look in a sense upon another world, which has its own laws and its own uses. In its own domain its sovereignty is absolute. You throw a stone into its bosom, but how discomfited the stone is; after the splash, it disappears and is buried. The keel of the ship ventures to plough the sea, but it leaves no furrow behind.

Yet how nobly catholic is the sea! Men parcel off the land, and there is a bit of it that is Russia, and another that is France, and so on. They do not so parcel off the sea; it belongs to the race. It lays its bosom open to receive craft of all nations, and treats them all alike. By whatever approach you reach it and at whatever point you touch it—it is the sea.

It is not to be supposed that all those thoughts passed through my mind as the spell of the sea began to work upon me. But who knows what are the workings of a budding intelligence under the mystic wonders of God's great creation? Is not the sea a special favourite with the child because of the deep fellow-feeling between them? Is not the sea a big child, so lively, ever in motion and never two days alike? I cannot but think that what drew me so irresistably to Kirkcaldy sands was the feeling that the sea, like myself, seemed to have much leisure on hand for anything that might turn up.

Coming to things more practical and obvious, I believe the sense of possession and the unrestricted freedom a child has in a strip of sea-shore has a great deal to do with the rush that is made to it, whenever the times and the seasons permit. The sands are "no-man's-land," the juvenile squatters' paradise, and children have on them the rare exhilaration of doing what they like. Brother and sister

with spade and pail in hand are equipped for any engineering feat which circumstances permit, seeking to taste the sweets of enterprise and gratified ambition. Their towers and canals and embankments on which they expended their energies will all be overthrown by the next tide; but that does not deter them, any more than reflection hinders the toilsome exertions of older persons upon the earth.

But my exploits upon the sands which have most indelibly engraven themselves upon my memory belong to a more advanced period in boyhood. The fires we kindled with sticks and bits of coal gathered upon the beach yield almost as much illumination and warmth now as they did nearly seventy years ago. I had an uncle as a playmate who was only eighteen months older than myself, and while he was not far enough ahead of me in years to be able to wield much authority, yet he had been so much longer in the world as to be more knowing, and more abreast of its devices.

One of the memorable things into which I became initiated through his tuition was to be able to extemporise a kitchen and cook a meal upon the sea-shore. A hole was dug in the sand, the sticks and coals carefully placed were brought to flame, bits of broken hoops were laid upon the fire, and potatoes, we got I know not where, were judiciously distributed upon them; and in an hour or so we had something to eat, the palatableness of which language could not describe. Roasted potatoes, with their *jackets on*, and you reclining as you eat upon the sun-heated sand, with the sound of the salt waves ringing in your ears—what first-class modern restaurant could furnish such a feast!

It was always a high time with us when a wood-yard, near our house, beached its logs from a Newfoundland ship

that was lying anchored in deep water. There were numberless opportunities for adventure such as a boy delights in, especially when the wind rose, and those piloting the rafts did not find it "plain sailing."

I must say my conscience troubles me a little when I review the wood-transport proceedings of those early days. It was difficult to be so near such a scene and not to be in it. But there was danger, certainly of wet feet, to those who took an active part in it, more as hinderers, I fear, than as helpers.

In later years I came to see Kirkcaldy sea-shore to be what it is, one of the finest in Scotland ; and much more so than it is now with its sewage and other modern and I suppose necessary arrangements. It is to be named along with the west sands of St. Andrews, the sea-shore on the other side of the golf course between Lossiemouth and the light-house, and Fraserburgh south shore, as the finest stretch of land bordering upon the sea which one could choose as a promenade.

The view from Kirkcaldy shore, looking across the sea, is as imposing to the imagination as it is to the eye. There, in haze and in smoke, is "Auld Reekie," with its noble Arthur's Seat, its Castle Hill and Pentlands behind. Between that and where you stand is romantic Inch Keith, where, it is said, that in the time of one of the Jameses, a dumb woman was placed alone with a child to care for, that as the result of the experiment it might be acertained whether, thus isolated and hearing no human speech, it would of itself, in course of time, articulate Hebrew !

These sands, too, on which in imagination we are standing, are teeming with illustrious associations. Adam Smith, a native of Kirkcaldy, paced those sands when he

was writing the "Wealth of Nations," and other books which made men think.

It will not be forgotten by lovers of Carlyle that he met in Kirkcaldy the person who is supposed to be his Blumine of "Sartor Resartus." Edward Irving was also there at the same time. Many years afterwards, when Carlyle was the guest of Provost Swan, he came down to the sands and bathed in the sea, which he declared was the best tonic he could get.

In conclusion, let me say that Kirkcaldy sea-shore has become part of myself. When I lie awake at night or am out alone in God's wide open, the tide now and again comes rushing in, and I almost hear its waves breaking at my feet. The memory does me good.

Buckle was not far wrong when he said that if people could be induced to leave the country and live where they saw little of the stars and hills, and heard no sounds but those of the street, Agnosticism would have a better chance.

III

THE "STAR"

IT is only by a figure of speech that my "Star" could be said to have had any place in a celestial order. It was not in itself a heavenly orb, but a patch of ordinary earth —why it became so ambitious in its designation I cannot tell—two or three miles from Markinch, in Fife.

I was sent there from Kirkcaldy when I was a boy to spend part of my holiday with a distant relative, who, half weaver and half farmer, was one of those "peasant princes" whom Carlyle claims to have been the strength and glory of Scotland.

The situation of this little centre of industry was so ideal, and the life that was lived in it so simple, and yet varied, that I have ever since kept the mental picture in a most honourable place in my gallery of memories. It has been indeed to me during all those years, without exaggeration, a star of no ordinary lustre, as I thought of the possibilities of this earth as a dwelling-place for man.

Most of us have had one or more "stars" which in early years swam within our ken, and though they did not bear the name, they really had the effect of brightening our prospect of life. "Your young men shall see visions." The visions come in earliest years, long before manhood's responsibilities are beginning to dawn.

Stars do come to us all, orbs of light and glory in nature, in history, in literature, in companionship, in experience—to suggest, to stir, to inspire, to show the way. Watt sat at his mother's fireside and watched his star as the steam came puffing from the kettle; Newton saw his star in the apple falling from the tree, suggesting or revealing the great universal principle of gravitation. A face, as Dante found, may become the ever shining star; a golden sentence of treasured wisdom, or a classic deed of noble heroism, may serve the same high purpose.

So far as the right ordering of the outward affairs of my fellow-creatures is concerned, I have ever looked back upon that happy centre of industry as a "pattern shown to me on the mount." I am not such a fool as to suppose that the same conditions of industry can continue, without any modification, from age to age. It is not written that man shall live by hand-loom weaving for ever and ever.

No: but it is written on man's own nature that he should live in obedience to the laws of the constitution under which he is placed. Commercialism is not to be the all-devouring Moloch which is the chief interest in life. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (in *R. V.*). And that spot of brightness and beauty in the "Star," which memory keeps alive, has been to me a standing witness against all that is mean and unhealthy in the habitations of man.

For example, when I passed through such a closely packed dingy district as the Cowcaddens of Glasgow, on the top of a tramcar some years ago, I saw it all in the light of my "Star," and I asked the questions—Is it necessary that God's creatures should be huddled together in this fashion? Is this one of the signs of social progress? Has

it ceased to be true "the earth hath he given to the children of man?" or, have all the empty spaces in our land become so crowded, that these poor people have to be packed like herrings in a barrel? I looked upon huge blocks of featureless tenements, which were like so many barracks or prisons lining both sides of the street, every inch of space having its commercial value. I saw no play-ground for the children except the public street, no place of recreation for the men but a big flaunting whisky-shop at each street corner, where wages were squandered and wives and children defrauded.

Those closes and stairs I passed led to a distribution of make-shift dwellings, having as near an approach to rabbit warrens as it was possible for human beings to be in, and the only persons to reap much benefit from such substitutes for true homes were owners of land, speculative builders, and distillers and publicans.

Can nothing be done to bring God's "large place" and the people together? We are thankful to hear of the larger spaces of "garden cities." But what are these among so many? Is it not time for a general movement to make room for the people? Evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of feeling, and all who dwell at ease in their spacious and comfortable houses are not callous-hearted, though it looks like it, when they pass by on the other side, as the cry is raised—give the people more space. Is it not true what Khama, the African chief, said after travelling over this country—"You English take care of your *goods*: you do not take such care of your people."

Those cooped-up quarters in our large cities, where men are thrown upon each other without the broadening, sweetening amenities of nature, tend to engender feelings

which do not favour piety and charity. Under such conditions the social distinctions become more invidious and irksome. The outward differences amongst men press themselves so much upon the attention when you are dependent upon things which cannot be obtained without money. In the country rich and poor share alike in the grand canopy of heaven—"to them the fields are green, the sky is blue"—in the wholesome and fragrant air, in the large spaces of nature with their landscapes. Much of that which makes life in the country cannot be confined, as pictures or articles of virtu, in a drawing-room.

What a recollection I have of the glory and splendour of the environment of that weaving shop in the "Star," and the dwelling at the other end, where contentment, intelligence, and piety were never absent! Truly, as Milton sings, "the mind is its own place," and it is at home in God's place. The crowds in the city cheapen human life too much, and it is apt to lose dignity and sacredness. The man whom Burns depicted in his "Cottar's Saturday Night" was no mere denizen. He had his place as an independent unit in society. As I think of that home in the "Star," I am reminded that it does not require a great deal to make human beings happy, if only they are industrious in their habits and simple in their tastes.

IV

THE TABERNACLE

DO not suppose from the above title that you are being led into a disquisition, more or less elaborate, upon the structure and uses of the ancient house of God in the wilderness. Our "Tabernacle" in Kirkcaldy was not a tent, but it was as near an approach to that as stone and lime could be, which did not profess to be anything else but the plainest, baldest protection of those assembled, against wind and weather. The four square walls, with pews and pulpit laid down upon the bare earthen floor, had only one recommendation, but an important one, that they were strong enough to withstand the stormy winds which swept from the sea only a few yards behind the pulpit gable.

Yet to not a few believing hearts God had made that "the place of his feet," and it was indeed "glorious in their eyes." They humbly sought to worship Him who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth, and there was consequently in the place the "Beauty of holiness." "Spiritual worship is extinct if we cannot lift up eye and heart and head with equal joy, if need demand, in the barn as in the cathedral." Is it not a sure sign of decadence when the form of an idea is more than the idea itself?

The original "Tabernacle" in Kirkcaldy was more humble still. It was the upper flat of a flax-dresser's warehouse, at the foot of a wynd branching from the links

and close upon the sea. Every Saturday there had to be a removal of bundles of flax, to make room for the little company that met next day for worship and communion. It was known in Kirkcaldy as the "Tow Kirk."

It is interesting, and in various ways suggestive, to be told that the owner of this "Tow Kirk" was Wm. Birrell, the father of one who became an outstanding Baptist minister in Liverpool, and grandfather of the Rt. Hon. Augustine Birrell, who, as I write, is a member of His Majesty's Government.

The application of the name "Tabernacle" needs to be explained. There were similar buildings in some of our small towns in Scotland, which have now been displaced by more modern and more conveniently situated places of worship, such as the one that was opened in the High Street of Kirkcaldy in 1874, under the pastorate of the Rev. G. McHardy, D.D. Some of the disused "Tabernacles" still stand, the memorials of a bygone generation, and, as in Kirkcaldy, are doing service as carpenters' shops, etc., but older members of the community cannot pass these by without revering their early associations. There is a similar building, put to another use, in Leith Walk, Edinburgh.

Those buildings are a standing memorial of a great religious movement which took place in Scotland more than a hundred years ago, associated with the name of the Haldanes. The two brothers, Robert and James, were members of an old Scottish family, and retired officers of His Majesty's Navy. They both came under the quickening power of religion in their early days, and as they were men who could not do anything except whole-heartedly, their decision soon made a difference in their pursuits.

Robert, the elder, the owner of the lovely estate of Airthrey, near Bridge of Allan, believing that if Christianity was anything, it was, as he said, "everything," sold it; and with the £70,000 thus released, employed missionaries, purchased religious tracts and books, and (when they were needed) helped to build places of worship which were often called "Tabernacles," to distinguish the "church," or spiritual body of believers, from the place in which they met.

James was the preacher, and he was a born one. He was a tall handsome man, under thirty years of age, and he went over the country, in a blue great-coat, braided in front, with brass buttons, his hair powdered and tied behind—as was the custom of the time.

Congregationalism was the form of church government chosen by the Haldanes and the majority of their fellow-labourers in various parts of the country, as the one that was favourable to spiritual fellowship, and that gave the most freedom for gospel work. Good Mr. Aikenhead, who for more than forty years was minister of the Tabernacle folk in Kirkcaldy, followed the example of the Haldanes and became a Baptist. The people he shepherded refused to accept his resignation, and it was agreed to make this difference of view a matter of mutual forbearance.

Scottish Independency might have had a very different history, if so much energy had not been diverted, at a very early period, to controversy. A sluice was put upon the stream. My father and grandfather took different sides, and I can remember that long after the separation took place in many parts of the country over this question, they met frequently on Sabbath evenings, and amongst the texts rehearsed few were more familiar than those in the Acts of

the Apostles bearing upon the question. Since those days the "Ethiopian Eunuch" and the "Philippian Jailor" come up to my memory as old friends, and through the action of sub-consciousness, so many other things—some rather incongruous, it must be owned—float in along with them.

Even as a child I perceived that while the discussion could be very animated, the heat never burned. Indeed, I rather liked to go to the conference in my grandsire's house, for it usually meant, as a reward for my patience, that I was carried home on his broad-shouldered back.

Two or three notable families, besides those already mentioned, sprang from that Tabernacle Fellowship. Ninian Lockhart, the progenitor of a numerous and vigorous race, was a man of conspicuous individuality and force, who, in various ways, made his mark in the *Lang Toun*. He had much to do with the rise of the local Baptist Church. A son of his, with whom I had conversations when he was an old man of 86 years, told me that when his father began as a hand-loom weaver he had, as a fellow-worker in the same weaving shop, John Philip, who afterwards made his mark as Dr. Philip of George Street Chapel, Aberdeen, and further on as superintendent of South African Missions. Lockhart said of Philip, long before his career opened out, that "he was a grand hand at telling stories."

The most of our Tabernacle members, like the Christians of Apostolic days, had to toil hard during the week, as was evidenced by the drowsiness which overtook some of them occasionally as they sat in a close atmosphere on a hot summer day. But those like to be overcome wrestled with sleep as with the devil, and I can remember seeing one after another rise from the pew and evidently listening to the

minister, as they stood, till by the change of attitude they had recovered themselves.

Before the followers of the Haldanes could have taken the stand which they did, with all that it involved at the time, they must have had some strength ; and what showed itself in things moral and spiritual did not hold back in things secular, the consequence being that through enterprise and hard work their circumstances generally improved with the years. Dr. Lindsay Alexander was once challenged rather rudely in a conference to show how it was possible for him, considering the wealthy appearance of his congregation, to preach the Gospel to the poor. His reply was that when he accepted the call to Argyle Square Chapel, Edinburgh, there were few, if any, of its members who would have required to pay the Income Tax that was levied at the time he was speaking.

V

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY

SCOTTISH Universities do not present so much that appeals to sentiment and imagination as Oxford and Cambridge. There was no localised life and organised fellowship with us as students. Memory has not, therefore, the same scope nor the same tenderness as we call up the past. The University to us in Edinburgh was little more than so many class-rooms, with platforms for the professors and sloping seats for the students, roofed and walled in ; and so far as external aspect was concerned there was not much that was not prosaic and utilitarian.

But for mental discipline, the acquisition of knowledge, professional training, and general equipment for life, the Scottish University system can hold its own as an asset of the people. There is not much of an outcome in the way of accomplishment and refinement of manner from our colleges, but for the solid work of the understanding they are of some account, as our professors are usually strong, capable men.

Let me mention the names of some of my professors who did much for me, as I sought the best result of a University training—the discipline of the mind and the opening up of the worlds of nature, thought, and history.

"Paltry Pillans," as Byron called him in his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," was over me in the Latin class-room. When I sat on its benches he was an aged man, and he bore the evident marks of age. But he was wonderfully vigorous mentally, and while he constantly held in his hand a big magnifying glass, it was not safe to presume too much upon his limited vision. He was a born teacher, one could see even then, and had an extraordinary gift of organisation. What an appreciation he had for the delicacies of Latin poetry! The old man's heart warmed and his face glowed as he expatiated on some of the choice passages in Virgil and Ovid. How he did make our hearts burn on one occasion, which I remember yet, when describing from one of the poets the supreme proof of earthly blessedness as consisting in lying under a lime-tree on a summer day and hearing the hum of the bees!

I need not dwell upon Professor Blackie, as everybody knows him. He gave us some Greek, and what was lacking in that was made up in other things. His range was wide, and included Sanscrit, etymology, history, theology. Above all he taught us to think, to be real, to be charitable, to be pure, and each one to be himself. He certainly did not come before us with the staid solemn dignity of the scholar who kept his students at arm's length. We felt he was a brother man, only older than we were and with more knowledge. No youth amongst us had more vivacity of manner and sprightliness of address, as he tripped along the platform and shook his white locks. Yet we ever respected him.

He took us into his confidence occasionally, and gave little bits of a superior kind of gossip. Dr. Guthrie was his favourite as a preacher, and he lamented that the

engrossing public life of the great popular preacher had made him "rusty in his Greek." Dr. Walter Smith was then a rising preacher in an obscure part of the Pleasance. After hearing him on Sunday, Blackie was sure to tell us in the class-room, on Monday, about the sermon, and predict a brilliant career for the young man. The Greek professor was a prophet as well as a teacher.

Who that has seen Professor Blackie pacing along Princes Street, with his plaid flung over his shoulder, his white locks flying in the wind, and heard him humming his Scottish song as he passed—can ever forget him! That clear-cut intellectual face imprinted its image upon all who saw it.

The chair of Logic and Metaphysics in my day was occupied by Professor Campbell Fraser. It was his fate to succeed Sir William Hamilton, a philospher of extraordinary learning, and masterly, if not original power. But Fraser, over-shadowed as he was, took his own line of things, which was very much that of an Eclectic. While not setting aside the Scottish system of philosophy which was inaugurated by Reid and elaborated by Hamilton, he tried to bring under our notice other phases of man's "thinking about thinking," as it has been called, which varies in fashion as ladies' dresses and many other things do.

As a teacher he was most successful, patient, painstaking, and encouraging. There was nothing pretentious in his prelections, nothing unsettling, but everything to induce us to seek for the truth and to prize it.

Patrick Macdougall was the occupant of the Moral Philosophy chair, and I remember his fervid rushing eloquence, as he set forth the high themes which it was his business to handle. He was a cultured Celt, who was at

home in the discussion of great questions which kindled understanding and heart. His character, accomplishments, and diligence won him the respect of his students.

The Rhetoric, or better, English Literature class, was more of an enjoyment than a task. The professor, W. Edmonstoune Aytoun, was not without some of the qualities and eccentricities of genius. He came to his class at four o'clock in the afternoon, sometimes looking as if he had just stumbled out of bed. But if, after that, you heard him recite one of the Scottish ballads, you forgot all about his unkempt appearance. It was an indescribable performance, and one that brought out the soul that was in the ballad. It was a sort of chant—weird, plaintive, and with something of the other world in it.

Aytoun, the author of the "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers," was the prince of literary Jacobites of his time, and, of course, a Tory of the Tories. You were not long in his class without finding that out, but he never lost his good humour. One day, when the noise was a little louder than usual, he said to us, with pleasant sarcasm :—"Gentlemen, remember this is a utilitarian age ; where is the profit of such exertion ?" He was faithful in examining the students' papers, and gave credit for the humblest signs of ability.

Tait, the professor of Natural Philosophy, had everything in his favour. With a distinguished career as a student behind him, a thorough master of his subject, tall, handsome, he stood before us at his ease with a benignant smile, and we were proud of him. Unlike many of his profession, he was a decided Christian believer. The only difficulty on the part of the average student was to rise to the high level which he took in unfolding the principles and facts of his boundless subject.

It may be mentioned that Alexander Smith, the city poet, and author of "Dreamthorp" and a "Summer in Skye," was secretary of Edinburgh University then, and I paid my matriculation fee to the silent, modest man. The late Prince Alfred, with his guardian, came to two class-rooms I attended—the Natural Philosophy and the English Literature.

VI

DR. LINDSAY ALEXANDER

I HAVE "sat at the feet" of many men, and were I—like Hugh Miller—to tell the story of "My Schools and Schoolmasters," I should have to give a large place to the man whose name heads this chapter. He was principal of our Theological Hall in Edinburgh, and for four years there was no man I more frequently met. He was to the end of his public life sole pastor of Augustine Church, Edinburgh, and almost every Sunday I looked upon his stately figure, and listened to his sonorous voice as it sounded forth the truth with clearness, force, and fervour, at once coming up to my opening mind as expositor, pastor, and frequently as impassioned orator.

Dr. Alexander had, from my earliest years, been a grand name and a household word to me, and now that I was brought into close personal contact with the kingly presence, I felt as I suppose a sprig of nobility would do who was promoted from an obscure home to a place in court.

There was something in his very appearance that was a fascination and an inspiration to a youth who was inclined to "hero worship." His tall, erect, well-proportioned figure, fine intellectual face, speaking eyes expressing a kindly soul as well as piercing thought, arrested you. There was a

reserve that was constitutional, and a dignity—almost a majesty—which went with his presence, and you could not well escape from his commanding authority when he was in his throne, *i.e.*, his pulpit; but out of it he was almost as bashful as a child.

His learning—he having received all that the schools could give him—along with his handsome person suggested classic finish, and as I looked at him I sometimes thought of one of the best of the old Roman fathers, who had come to life again for the benefit of the present generation. Dr. Donaldson, principal of St. Andrews University, who was once a member of Dr. Alexander's church, gives this testimony—"In fact he was the most perfect embodiment of the spirit of the scholar I have ever seen in the pulpit."

But he was no dry-as-dust commentator. He tried to get at the real word of God, and then, having laid a basis of accurate exegesis, he built up doctrine and shot forth application. He had imagination, passion, power to reach the heart and grip the conscience. His voice, too, was a fortune in itself. How he could make it ring! It was sometimes like the shout of battle; for no man could be more severe and sarcastic when the mood was upon him. At other times he fell into a sort of chant which had a strange thrilling effect upon the hearer. I never heard a voice so modulated, and with such variety and richness of tone. And with it all there was the old gospel, as much as with the Haldanes.

But while nature and education had been lavish in their gifts, he worked as hard as if all depended upon his persistent labour. If he seldom visited his congregation, he never brought to the pulpit what cost him nothing. He was in his prime and at the height of his popularity when

he became the centre of my academic circle, and few young men could take upon them the tasks which he cheerfully bore.

Besides attending to the wants of a large church, he had, along with Dr. Gowan, the students of our denomination under his charge; he was also a member of the Revision Committee which met periodically in the Jerusalem chamber; he had on hand the editorship of a new issue of Kitto's Cyclopædia, the publisher being one of his own deacons—Adam Black. During the early part of my time in Edinburgh, his people were erecting Augustine Church at George IV Bridge, and in the interval were worshipping in Queen Street Hall, which gave the dwellers on the south side and west end of Edinburgh easy access to Dr. Alexander, who was classed with Guthrie and Candlish as one of the great preachers of the city.

He also wrote several books which attained to considerable fame, such as the "Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments," "Anglo-Catholicism not Apostolical," "Memoirs of Dr. Ralph Wardlaw," and many others.

He never was what can be called a popular author. He belonged to one of the smallest denominations in the land, and, more than most people imagine, the buying of books written by ministers is determined by a sense of duty on the part of the people to their own men. That was perhaps more the feeling in those days than it is now.

But no man in Edinburgh was held in higher esteem by all churches and classes than Dr. Alexander. Students of all denominations, as recent biographies abundantly show, came regularly to his church, and were not slow in acknowledging the great service he rendered to them.

Among his most intimate friends was Dean Ramsay, and the friendship came out in many striking ways. After the Dean's death the following note was found among his papers :—"After my death, on this cover being opened, I wish a message to be sent to the Rev. Dr. Lindsay Alexander, expressive of my continued regard and esteem, and my assurance that I leave no friend behind whom I more highly respect than himself; that as a last request and as a last testimony of my affection I beg him to go down to 23 Ainslie Place [Dean Ramsay's home], on the day of my funeral and before the funeral 'lifts' for St. John's; that he would give the household and near relatives there a short funeral service, as he did in the case of Lucy Cochrane [the Dean's niece], and Sir William Ramsay" (a brother of the Dean and a worshipper in Augustine Church).

In 1877, Dr. Alexander, conscious of growing weakness, resigned his pastoral connection with Augustine Church, and lived most of his time in Pinkieburn, an old property near Musselburgh that was a valued maternal heritage. In 1882 he retired from the duties of the Theological Hall, and in 1884 he died.

Dr. Alexander's relations with his colleague in the Theological Hall, Dr. A. T. Gowan, were most beautiful. Dr. Gowan was pastor of the Congregational Church in Dalkeith, and professor of Old Testament literature in our school of the prophets. He was a brilliant Greek and Hebrew scholar, Tait's (Archbishop) rival in the Greek Class at Glasgow University. He was a modest man, and retiring to a fault; but he was esteemed and loved as few in his position are, and by none more than by Dr. Alexander.

It was with the Hebrew class that we chiefly associated Dr. Gowan. There was a legend that he slept with the

Hebrew Bible under his pillow every night! A fellow-student, to whom the study of Hebrew was much more of a task than a pleasure, was laid down with brain fever. The story goes that the Doctor went to visit the sick man, and as he appeared at the bedroom door he was saluted with the words—"Oh! Hebrew, Hebrew, thou art a root out of a dry ground!"

Anticipating events which belong to a period a little later, I may say that I did not "meet" Dr. Alexander "by the way," on a certain occasion when I was most anxious to do so. It had been arranged that our new place of worship in Elgin was to be opened by Dr. W. L. Alexander on January 13th, 1867, and the people of the town as well as our own congregation were looking forward to the coming of a great event.

But an extraordinary snow-storm came on, and the doctor could not get a train to take him further north than Aberdeen. I had to open the new place of worship myself. Dr. Wylie, the Established Church minister, kindly took the place allotted to me in the afternoon, and the big parish kirk, full of people waiting to hear the great man from Edinburgh in the evening, had to content itself with the "young minister." It was indeed enduring hardness all round. Later on in the year, the good kindly doctor did find his way to us, to the delight of Elgin, as well as to its Congregational Church.

ELGIN

VII

ELSPETH

I AM afraid Elspeth agreed with Rowland Hill when he said that Divinity Halls were places for preparing *dried* tongues, and she wanted to supplement the academic prelections I had listened to with something which came warm from the heart. I, therefore, from time to time, got scintillations of wisdom from her active mind and full experience, which flew forth as readily from her as sparks from the hot iron under the blacksmith's hammer. Shortly after the ordination services were over, I was invited to come down to the farmhouse and take a cup of tea with her and her husband. I was only too glad to go, knowing it would be tea, and something to it which would feast the mind as much as the tea regaled the outer man. It was a sumptuous tea. Dr. Johnson, notwithstanding his violent prejudice against everything Scottish, spoke enthusiastically of a Scotch breakfast; but commend me to a northern farmhouse tea. Settling down by the fireside, and speaking about the work that was before me as a minister, and the prospects of the Church, I saw she was girding herself for an effort, and at last, as my friendly and honoured counsellor, she broke forth as follows:—

"Noo, Maister ——, though ye're my minister, an' I respec' ye for yer wark's sake, ye'll no tak' it ill o' an auld

woman like me tae gie ye a word or twa o' advice, mair especially as Scriptur' says we're tae exhort ane anither. Ye see, ye're but a young servant o' the Lord, an' I'm an auld auld ane, an' I'll sune be gaun awa' hame for rest. I would like tae think ye'll be a usefu' an' faithfu' minister o' the New Covenant lang aifter I'm in anither warl'; an' I'm gaun tae gie ye the fruit o' my experience, as ane that has seen a guid deal o' life, baith amang saunts an' sinners. Noo, tak' yer place, an' keep it, as the minister o' the kirk. Magnifee yer office, an' no yersel'. Lat nae man depise yer youth. Read the twa Epistles tae Timothy every week, an' think muckle o' Paul, an' mair o' his Maister. Dinna be creepin' intil a corner; modesty is a' very guid, but ye maun min' the trust the Lordhas pitten in tae yer hauns. If, like Moses an' Gideon, ye should be inclined tae haud back at ony time, yet, like them, ye maun gang tae the front when the Lord commands.

"But dinna be owre forward. Man, but it scunners me tae hear stripplins braggin' o' what they can dae. They're like Dauvid, but withoot the sling an' the stanes, an' the trust in the Lord, an' they rin awa' afore every Goliath. Say 'whisht' tae the promptins o' vainity; if ye've ony respec' for yoursel,' never blaw yer ain trumpet; if yer trumpeter should dee, raither hae nae trumpetin' ava than dae it yoursel'. For that maitter o't, I never kenned o' ony guid bein' dune wi' blawin' trumpets, excep' at the pu'in' doon o' the wa's o' Jericho; an' it's no dingin' doon wa's that ye've tae dae, but biggin' up. Sae what ye need is no' a trumpet, but, Nehemiah-like, a swurd an' a trool, mair especially a trool, as ye'll hae mair use for it than a swurd, an' I daursay the ane 'll come a wee thing mair handy tae ye than the t'ither.

"Be sure ye're aye in the fashion, but let it be the fashion o' the Kingdom o' Heaven. Dinna mak' a God o' popularity ; for if we set up that Dagon it 'll come doon on its face some day, an' maybe clour yer croon as it fa's. But dinna conter men needlessly ; gang wi' the warl' as far as Christ 'll gang wi' ye, but, mind you, no' an inch farrer. Ye ken, the spirit o' the age, an' the Spirit o' Christ dinna aye agree, or there wudna' hae been a Cross.

"Begin to think there's somethin' wrang when the multitude an' you are aye on the same side. If ye hae a horse tae spare, ye're no' tae yoke it tae a kerridge that's gaun doon the hill, but keep it for pu'in' up ; it's sair wark tae gang against the warl', the flesh, an' the devil, an' a' yer power is needit for that.

"Ye're no tae jump aifter every novelty, like a bairn at a butterflee. Mak' progress, an' dinna blether aboot it. What's the guid o' tellin' the warl' hoo far ye've gotten afore the fathers ; but ye'll be a great gouk if ye have na learned somethin' sin' their time. When I hear young preachers crawin' awa' aboot advancement, I pity the puir souls that come for bread an' get naething better than vapour. Man, it's no yer new ploughs an' yer improved sowin' machines that are tae cover the field wi' corn ; it's the seed o' the Kingdom—that's no' o' yesterday.

"Ye should just be like the big ash tree in the front o' oor door, that was rooted there afore ony o' us was born, an' has never fa'en doon afore the snellest blast that blew ; an' yet in simmer it's upsides wi' the new an' braw things in field an' gairden, an' pits on its bonnie dress o' green every year.

"Tak' a guid grip o' truth : that's aulder than the hills, an' yet, if it's livin' in the hert, is aye young. Ye'll be a

fule if ye dinna tak' a' kin' o' improvements in the Lord's wark, but, mind you, it's His Word that endureth for ever that's tae convert the wilderness into the gairden o' the Lord, an' nae novelty that you or ony ither body has invented. Ye ken, there's nae cratur mair disposed to tak' a way o' its ain than a sheep, an' nane sae little able tae tak' a richt ane ; an' we're a' sheep.

"Some ministers are unco fond o' lang-nebbit words ; but pack you big thochts into short words. Ye canna be owre gran' in your thochts, an' ye canna be owre simple in your language.

"Ye're no tae be doonherted when prosperity doesna' flow as ye wad like it ; when the tide's gaun back, ye're no tae think there's a hole in the bottom o' the sea, an' a' thing's comin' tae an end ; it'll come back again ; for doesna' He haud the waters o' the deep i' the hollow o' His hand ? When things are no gaun forward in the Kingdom, just you be mair on your knees, an' while ye may hae tae testifee against defections, ye're no to be aye croakin' in the pu'pit like a corbie on a dyke heid.

"Tell the fouk what ye believe, an' no what ye doot ; gie them yer licht, an' keep the smoke tae yersel' ; we've enough smoke at hame without comin' tae the kirk for 't ; it was the things most surely believed that the Apostles preached, an' no the ill notions that cam' intae their heids. Leave a' yer smoke ahin' you when ye speak in God's name, an' try to keep a guid-gaun vent in your study for the soul as well as for the body. Ye're no tae fecht wi' ghaists, but wi' livin' men. Ye're no tae be wastin' your poother an' shot upon the wicked Scribes an' Pharisees, lang syne cauld in their graves. It's no far awa' evils that ye hae tae smite wi' the swurd o' the Spirit, though ye're no

sae likely tae get the applause o' your generation by tellin' what's wrang in it. Be sure that ye aye water the roots mair than the leaves, an' mak' muckle o' the state o' the hert, for if it be richt naething else can be far wrang.

"Ye maun learn tae endure hardness as a guid soldier o' Christ. Ye're no tae think ye'll ca' the hail warl' afore ye. Keep walkin' on the path o' righteousness, an' ye'll be sure o' at least ae companion, an' He aye brings mair. Ye're no tae be cast doon wi' every caul' look or het word; for ye maun expec' tae meet ill-natur'd an' cantankerous fouk, even in the kirk. Learn tae thole an' say naething, like the Lord Himsel'. Dinna be in a hurry tae leave the fouk o' your choice. Ministers used tae bide wi' their flocks as a man wi' his wife, for better or waur; but noo they're easy pairtit. Dinna be a gangrel body trottin' aboot frae kirk tae kirk. If God has a higher place for ye, ye'll get it, if ye dae yer duty whaur ye are, but ye're nae tae seek it—nae tae be glowerin' at something far awa', like a sheep lookin' through a palin' at richer pasture on the ither side. Honour God, an', tak' the word o' ane that has tried Him for mair than three-score years an' ten, your honour an' a' your concerns 'll be safe in His haun's."

VIII

SIMEON MACPHAIL OF ELGIN

SIMEON MACPHAIL, my neighbour and friend in Elgin long ago, was a born preacher; and while he could open up the Scriptures, and apply them for the edification of believers with rare skill, the crowning proof of his power was seen in the Evangelistic meeting. There he was perfectly at home, as I have seldom seen any trained minister. He was a true Celt, and one of the best type of the race. His profoundly reverent appreciation of the facts of the Gospel, his awful sense of responsibility as having to deliver a message which was of such momentous and far-reaching consequence to mankind, his bold directness in flinging himself, or rather the truth, upon his audience, his pleading heart-ringing tones as he tried to persuade men to submit to God, can never be forgotten by those who saw and heard. He was, up to his measure, of the school and spirit of Columba.

Macphail was a scholar, and he would have got much more credit for his scholarship if he had been less addicted to consuming devotion to Evangelism. The man who is emancipated from self-consciousness, and is burning with a passion for the salvation of his fellow-men, is much less likely to be greeted with the designation of a learned or intellectual preacher than the person who is dry and

technical; though, as a matter of fact, there may be much more knowledge behind that Pauline steadfastness to the "one thing" than there is in the anatomy of bones rattled in the face of the congregation. The truth is, "intellectualism" in the pulpit is affectation, and a dangerous one, as Vinet—one of the most intellectual men of his day—points out in very strong language, which I scarcely dare to repeat without giving the context.

A man of our own time, principal of one of our colleges, put the matter powerfully the other day:—"Our essential aim as preachers is not to enlighten, but to move men to follow the light they have. The outward lives by knowledge, the inner abiding man lives by love and hate, by aspiration and desire, and it is the inner man we are after."

"I call," he said, "all the great preachers as witnesses on my side. Without exception their sermons, however intellectual in mould, however illuminating in idea, are primarily directed to awaken emotion, to quicken the heart, to affect the conscience, to rouse the aspirations common to mankind. They strike the human, the universal note. They strike below the line of differences between one man and another, and reach that in them which makes them men."

Macphail recognised the fact that he was evidently intended to be a preacher, and he gave the world few opportunities of testing his abilities as a writer. His book on Pluscardine Priory reveals an enormous amount of painstaking research, and will be a quarry for future historians; but the form in which the interesting information is put could be improved. It proves what has been remarked, that some distinguished Scottish students of olden times knew Latin and Greek better than English.

As indicating the intimacy of the friendship between us, it may be mentioned that Mr. Macphail and I breakfasted together every Monday morning, and went over the work of the previous day. We were apart and yet near. We belonged to different sections of the Christian church; his was a large congregation and mine a small one. His temperament and mine were not exactly of the same order; but we were both young, and all the other ministers in the town were elderly; and we both had a keenness which showed itself in a certain impatience with religion that identified itself too much with mere form and creed. I owe much to Macphail. He helped to bring me into touch with that school of Scottish theology and experience which represents what is most intense and lofty, most devoted and aggressive in the history of the church of our land.

Simeon Macphail had two brothers who were ministers in the same church, and, like him, breathed much of its early spirit. One of them was distinguished for his knowledge of the history of the Scottish Church, and was regarded as quite an authority on questions relating to Columba and the early Celtic worthies. He became well known as minister of the East Free Church, Aberdeen, and afterwards of Pilrig, Edinburgh.

The elder brother served a life-time in Skye, winning the confidence and reverence of all who knew of his simple unfaltering devotion. He was a tall, powerful, handsome man, with a magnificent shock of hair on his head, even in old age. That may have suggested the story—which I hand on without any guarantee as to its origin—that he was preaching one night in a barn when the fowls were preparing to roost, and one, attracted by the comfortable-looking bedding, settled down upon his head!

Their father, who was connected with the excise, happened to be stationed at Banff during the revival of 1859-60. His house was on the south side of the Congregational Manse, and Mrs. Macphail, who had almost as much force and quaintness of character as John Murker, co-operated heartily with him in the meetings then being held. Her sitting-room adjoined Mr. Murker's study, and when they were about to pray, as agreed upon, for the meeting of the evening, she knocked upon the intervening wall.

When the father died Mrs. Macphail came to Elgin with a daughter to be near Simeon, who was the "express" train of the family, in her estimation, the other two being respectively the "ordinary" and "parliamentary."

But the good old lady did not see her son so often as she expected. A huge congregation, which he had to shepherd single-handed, and preaching engagements all over the north, left little time for meeting even his mother. "I hope, Simeon," she said one day, "when we get to Heaven we may see a little more of each other."

The Apostle Peter was a great favourite with Mrs. Macphail, and one Sabbath, when her son had been preaching upon him and saying rather hard things of his mercurial tendencies (youth is ever more severe than age), she said when the service was over, "Simeon, I'll be in Heaven before you, and I will say to Peter—'Peter, never mind what has been said against you, it is just Simeon'." No one gave him more puzzling questions to answer than his mother. After reading about the incident of the fig-tree one morning, she said to him the first chance she had—"Simeon, where was Martha that morning, that our Lord on leaving Bethany should have been hungry when he came to the fig-tree?"

That old lady, whom I knew well, was truly a mother in Israel, and one of commanding character. Quaint, original, deeply earnest, she was of an order of women of whom there were many in Scotland when she was young, and when great events were being brought to birth.

IX

PETER, THE PRECENTOR

IT was to Peter the great joy of the week, and the pride of his life, to be the "uptaker" of "Dundee," "Coleshill," "Martyrdom," "Ballerma," and other tunes which now belong to the remote past as much as the white "mutches" of the matrons in Knockando, or the blue bonnets of the brethren which were reverently doffed as they crossed the threshold of the chapel. It would be a bold assertion to say that the singing of those days could bear the highest artistic tests, but it served the prime object of church psalmody, which is to awaken and express devotional feeling, and uplift the soul to God. One had only to look at the faces of the singers, who were the entire congregation, to see that their hearts were in the service; and to Him who judgeth not by the outward appearance or sound, there was doubtless as much real praise in that little sanctuary as in Heaven itself.

Peter of Birnie was our honorary precentor; not that he, honest man, would ever have thought of applying such a learned and complimentary adjective to the service he was accustomed to render to our church. He did not regard as specially meritorious what he was able to do for our little spiritual common-wealth, as he stood in the box beneath the pulpit leading the singing in accents more hearty than refined.

It was an understood canon and a generally accepted principle of action in our fellowship, that whatever a member was able to do for its advantage, he was under solemn obligation to do for Christ's sake. We never dreamed for a moment that the pastor was *paid* for his work, but, as his whole time was devoted to the duties of the ministry, he was provided with a maintenance in the salary he received, supplemented by occasional gifts of fowls, eggs, and butter, which were taken in the spirit in which they were given. The other persons identified with the "Cause," who made a living by farming or some other calling, esteemed it to be a privilege, as Peter did, to surrender a liberal portion of their time and energy to church work.

Peter was of a mercurial and exuberant temperament. He had social qualities, and, having been welcomed as a singer in all sorts of company in his youth, he had most of the songs and ballads of the countryside in his head. It was a great trouble to him, in the later and higher developments of his inward experience, that those "carnal" tunes and snatches of songs should still be where they were. They would come up as unbidden guests into the chamber of his consciousness at most unseasonable times, to distract his thought and vex his soul.

One Sabbath morning, as he was travelling down the slopes of the Mannoch hill to church, with a wilderness-solitude all around him, broken only by the gush of the upland brook and the scream of the curlew; he was trying to concentrate his thoughts upon Christ as the great High Priest of our profession, that having been the subject of the chapter he had read at family worship in the morning.

But one of those "worldly" airs with which he had been so familiar in his early days would thrust itself in, like a spirit that was peeping from the pit into the sanctuary of God. He tried to shut it out by sheer force of will, but he was as one beating the air; the strange uncanny visitant glided into his brain, when Peter thought the door was closed and barred.

At last, when other devices came to nothing, the daring thought struck him that perhaps the best way of exorcising this evil spirit was just to let it out! So "I jist sat doon on a big stane," as he himself afterwards, in describing the experience, said, "an' I whistled it oot frae the beginnin' to the en', Sabbath mornin' though it was, an' I was nae mair troubled wi' it the rest o' the way; I jist whistled it oot an' whistled it awa'"—a mode of exorcising that would scarcely answer with regard to every evil spirit that haunts and vexes the brain.

It cannot be said that Peter was a man of "wecht" amongst us. His fellow-members did not look up to him, unless when he was perched in the precentor's desk; but everybody liked him. No one questioned the sincerity of his religious profession and his conscientious desire to do his duty as it came to him; but partly owing to his antecedents, and the volatile tendencies of his mind, his grave brethren did not reckon him as in the completest sense of the phrase one of themselves. He was, so far as their feeling was concerned, if not exactly a proselyte of the gate, yet some flippant critics might say, very much what a twittering sparrow or sportive jackdaw would be in a company of sedate owls or barn-door fowls. He had entered the membership of the church, like the others, on a personal testimony to the power of divine grace in his heart, and no

one doubted that he was a converted man ; but somehow he often introduced a jarring note on other occasions than when he was leading the psalmody.

Elspeth was accustomed to say of Peter that he had "aye plenty o' sail, but was gey jimpit wi' ballast." He was a man of fits and starts—he himself would have said, of moods. He liked to hop, step, and leap in the Christian course. He chafed under what he called the humdrum ways of his more sober-minded fellow church members. Nothing pleased him more than plenty of "stour." He felt as if nothing was being done unless there was din, stir, movement. He was ever on the crest of a wave—till he came down. Difficulties vanished before the magic wand of his sanguine imagination ; things were going to resolve themselves, not according to the course of Nature, but according to his plan, and he had a great many panaceas in his busy brain for the church and the world, all eagerly competing for the fore-most place. Not content with the freshness which comes with the vital action of truth, and the adaptation of environment that may grow but cannot be created, he expected the golden age to come by arrangement. When an idea caught him, he was impatient with the slow pedestrianism of mortals, and longed for the wings of the wind, and sometimes he almost looked and spoke as if he had got them.

Peter sniffed novelty from afar, and it was more delicious to his nostrils than the choicest aroma of field or garden. He was always looking out for some short cut to the goal ; new views and he could not keep apart, any more than steel filings can stand aloof from the magnet. It did almost appear as if those dancing tunes in his brain had some effect upon his Christian gait : he was so apt to take what was no

more than a "flash o' the pan" for the thundering voice of heaven, and to see the "march of progress" in what was only a cloud of dust flying before the wind on the highway. He was too good a farmer to prefer the pattering hail to the soft rain and gentle dew; but in things spiritual he certainly liked a demonstration that was palpable. A fire which had an intense and quiet glow was not enough; he liked, in addition, to hear much crackling and to see occasional showers of sparks. He was quite sure there was gold behind what glittered, and the worst of it was that he did not always continue to handle patiently the precious ore if the sparkle did not show itself soon.

It was truly pathetic to see how, after some favourite interpretation of prophecy had been falsified in the glaring light of actual experience, or a pet theory had been upset by stern and stubborn facts, Peter, knocked down and ruthlessly trampled upon metaphorically, would immediately get up again smiling, as ready as ever to believe that the kingdom of heaven was about to come through some new theory or doctrine that was in the air. It is said by Burns that "facts are chiels that winna ding," but there are some men, like Peter the precentor, whom facts cannot "ding," and they go on blowing their soap-bubbles though they, one after another, melt in the air as they rise. They cannot content themselves with the quiet methods and slow processes which the experience of ages has proved to be the only effective ones to bring about the coming of the kingdom of heaven, and with the open arms of a generous and guileless trust are ready to embrace the latest patented theory for the manufacture of a millenium.

But Peter's heart was ever in the right place, though his head had occasionally considerable difficulty in giving a

good account of itself. He was interesting, too: "Short swallow flights are as interesting in their way as the sustained and bold soaring of the eagle." Moreover, while he had more enthusiasm than he had mind to manage, he was not without his useful function in that little community, which sometimes mistook conservatism for steadfastness. If his cream was often only so much froth, there were always plenty of shrewd heads in the fellowship to detect the imposition; and while he needed them to control and wisely use the energy he so readily generated, they, on the other hand, predisposed to move slowly on the old paths, were not without compensating advantages in his stimulating presence; all the more so as it was generally admitted that, while he had numerous "bees in his bonnet," no one had ever seen the slightest trace of a wasp.

Emerson, with a grim humour in which there is a large dash of truth, tells us that some of the Pilgrim Fathers in America were so holy and ripe for heaven that they had to take hold of the huckleberry bushes lest they should be involuntarily drawn up and prematurely translated. So Peter's fellow-members, who were apt to think him feather-headed, had to act as a restraining force, if not from heaven, from some undefinable point between it and Morayshire. They were to him like the rope of a captive balloon, holding him within a measurable distance of the solid earth, else he might have gone no one knew where.

X

THOMAS CARLYLE

I WAS present at the inauguration of Thomas Carlyle, in 1866, to the Lord-Rectorship of Edinburgh University, and heard his address to the students, who had chosen him; and I think it was without exception and without exaggeration the greatest and most memorable public event in my life. It was, in what it suggested and gave scope to the imagination to portray, as well as in what was immediately set forth, unapproachably unique.

To those who penetrated the inner meaning of the spectacle, and who could trace back the man who stood before them along the winding and uphill path which had been traversed, and in which he had borne himself so honourably, since he, a lad of 14, had trudged on foot from the home of his father, the stone-mason of Ecclefechan—a distance of 80 miles—to become a student in the University of which he was now the chief dignitary, to such was there not a moral grandeur, touched with romance, in the scene?

It is not often that the world gives us the opportunity of witnessing such an example of poetical justice, such unqualified deference to the ideal and picturesque. You felt as you sat (or stood—which I had to do all the time), and looked and listened, that this was a clear triumph of

mind and character over circumstance. It was not mere worldly greatness coming to the front and standing high in the eyes of men. It was the "Republic of letters" choosing and honouring its head. It was contemporary history recording the fact, more impressively than even our poet Burns did, that "a man's a man for a' that."

I do not think I ever saw an assembly so distinguished from the scholastic and literary point of view. All around, as you looked, you could see that Scotland had sent her most illustrious sons to do honour to the greatest genius of his generation. The famous Dr. John Caird was close beside me as I was pressing into the hall. England, too, was doing its part in the presence of Huxley, Tyndall, and many others great in science and literature.

One of the striking proofs of the reverence of the audience for the speaker was its quietness. The young men before him were certainly all alive, but it was life under respectful control. It was very different from what I had witnessed some years before, when Sir David Brewster gave his address as the newly-appointed Principal. It must have been some of the "colts" that Burns alludes to as finding their way into the University, who created the bedlam uproar on that occasion. The old man, who had earned a title to a different kind of treatment, could not be heard for the din. To one who had exalted notions of a seat of learning as a centre of refinement and dignity, and who approached it with some degree of awe, it gave such a shock.

But University authority, which, to its own discredit, seems to be powerless when it tries to cope with such disorder, had nothing whatever to do with the rapt attention paid by this immense and enthusiastic assembly. The comparative stillness was a spontaneous tribute to the authority

of genius and character. The young fellows had met their master, and they knew it. The truth was they could not help hanging upon the lips of this modern seer and oracle, whose works had searched and kindled their minds and hearts.

Not that there was much to overpower in the external appearance of what was before the listeners. They saw a man a little above the average height, with iron grey hair, luminous piercing eyes, a rose in his cheek as if he had just come from Annandale, and with the vernacular of early days pure and undiluted, which plainly testified that it was from that country he had really come.

The address was quite extemporaneous in form, but the subject was almost as old as himself. It was the calm deliberate outpouring of the thought of a life-time. He spoke like a father to his children, "slowly, connectedly, nobly," and as was said at the time, "all listened like children held by a tale of wonderland." It had a quiet, serious, earnest tone, and was far removed from the flippancy of the dilettante, or the mere litterateur. The address was vital all through, and had its strokes of wit, but it had none of that boisterous extravagance and grotesque humour which he is reported to have indulged in occasionally at his own fireside. He evidently felt it to be a great occasion for all present, and especially for the young men before him setting out in life, and he would have them to grip reality and be gripped by it. Words fell from his lips, which would have more weight than from any preacher, about the necessity of religion to make a strong life and a noble nation.

He told us that he had tried to write a discourse for the gathering, but could not, and so he threw himself upon his audience for sympathy and inspiration. His faith was rewarded, and experience proved that it was the right

method both for speaker and hearers. It was noticeable that he did not mar the flow of his speech by stopping to mend a sentence. He went straight on without changing a word. The address lasted about an hour.

In his reminiscences of Thomas Erskine, of Linlathen, Principal Shairp, of St. Andrews, gives some information about the way in which Carlyle spent the evening, with a few friends, after the burden of the address was off his mind. He was a guest in Erskine's Edinburgh house, and it was rumoured that all the clocks in it were stopped the night before the great occasion, that the risk of broken sleep might be avoided.

It says much for both those men—Carlyle and Erskine —that the intimacy between them should have been so close and so long continued. Erskine did not spare his friend, but had the courage to tell him that he was spending far too much time and energy upon such a character as Frederick. He said in a letter to Carlyle that he would "rather be honest Mrs. Brand" (an old woman Carlyle was interested in and helped), "selling flour and bacon, and lovingly bearing the burden of her bed-ridden son!"

As I bridge the years between manhood's beginning and ending upon the earth, and in thought put myself once more as a unit in that great gathering, which came, not only to acknowledge worth, but to receive a message for the hour, I think I understand the messenger better now than I did then. I recognise the limitations of his message as fully as ever; but as far as it goes, after making necessary deductions —for he was human and had the "defects of his qualities"— I thank God for it. What Puritanism was to English life two centuries ago Thomas Carlyle was to his generation— a force for Righteousness.

As I picture that scene in the Music Hall in Edinbugh, and call up the essential and permanent impression, all that I remember is in harmony with the testimony which I have just given. I see the quiet simple figure of a man who has glow and power in his words, but no brilliancy of rhetoric, as he urges his fellows to be true to their highest visions, to keep the enthralling and seducing earth in its subordinate place, and to be men in moral stedfastness and spiritual aspiration.

XI

JOHN MURKER OF BANFF

MR. MURKER was described as a man "whose words are things, and whose speech is a living picture," and readers will see for themselves that the witness is true. He had the power of dramatic realisation, which imparts a captivating vividness to his master-strokes. Let us give some of the picturesque phrases which were part of his capital in public life.

The patriarchs were described as "Those calm-browed men who walked in the dim twilight of the world's history"; Abraham, as "That heaven-directed wanderer"; Lot was "A 'sober' saint"; John the Baptist was "That out-spoken man of the wilderness." John Mark was derided for his timidity in the presence of a storm of persecution—"He ran back to Jerusalem to his mother, like a petted child." Of Judas Iscariot he said—"He lifted the latch of eternity with his own hand, and arrived in hell before the devil expected him." He had a profound admiration for Paul, and spoke of him as "That flaming herald of the cross." He had no love for the Herods. Discoursing on Acts xii., 23, he said—"The extremes of creation rushed forth to destroy Herod, an *angel* and a *worm*." The Galatians were "That fickle and volatile people."

He often spoke of the rebellion of the angels and the fall of man as "That disastrous deed done in Eden's bowers which has made all our hearts to quiver," or "That dark day in Eden's bowers that shook the world and shattered souls by millions"; "Sin had dug hell deep and hung it in black"; "The devil waved the black banner of rebellion over the battlements of Heaven."

The angels and their "untiring wing" was a favourite theme. He was discoursing one day on progress, and, amongst other things, said that there would be a going forward and upward even in Heaven. "Some of you Christians will make such progress in the other world that you will go on and go on till you are able to take the angel Gabriel's place; and the angel Gabriel will go on and on till he can take the place of——but where am I? Ah! I am lost." He spoke of the Christian "singing the hallelujahs of Heaven through the sweep and the swell of eternity." It gave him great pleasure to speak of Heaven's demonstration at the birth of Jesus:—"The plains of Bethlehem were then radiant with light and vocal with music; there was no need for an organ," and sometimes slyly adding—"as little use as a minister has for a manuscript."

He had very exalted ideas of the august majesty of God and the ineffable splendour of His holiness. He spoke of the "Stately steppings of Providence": "Can you (the creature) go to the utmost limit of space where you are not able to stretch out your arm?" Referring to the North Pole, he said: "Has not God guarded well the secrets of the Pole with thick-ribbed ice?"

In referring to the mystery of the Word becoming flesh, he said: "Christ had spanned the whole diameter of rational existence." He continually insisted that the Gospel was all

summed up in the "Three R's: Ruin by the Fall, Redemption by Jesus Christ, Regeneration by the Holy Spirit." He "preached a Christ for every sinner out of hell, and a hell for every sinner out of Christ."

A very common petition in his public prayers was: "Be very gracious to those who are striving to give green existence (youth) a bending in the right direction." Another was: "Look down in mercy upon those who are sleeping in the lap of a heartless formality." He was too loyal to forget his duty to the powers that be. All ranks were remembered:—"From the Queen on the throne to the petty magistrate." He often had a beautiful reference to "the unanswered prayers which still lie upon the altar." Seldom a day passed when he was advanced in years without the prayer—"Raise up in the young a seed to serve the Lord, when some of us shall be sweetly sleeping 'neath the clods of the valley." At the close of every evangelistic service which he conducted, and after dismissing those whose engagements elsewhere required them to go, he usually held a prayer meeting, his favourite expression when opening it being: "Now let us have an *agonising* prayer meeting."

He had many arrows in his quiver for unbelief and emasculated theology: "Some people who would fain be esteemed wise in their generation tell us that our belief endeth where mystery begins. What! will anyone tell me that *travelling stops where the sea begins?*" He had no great respect for a subjective theology: "Just a fibreless tissue of silly twaddle," or, a "spider-like web spun out of their own bowels." He often referred feelingly to the good times that existed "before the days of the negative theology came to blast and to blight the Lord's heritage." Expressing his double-distilled contempt for some of the phases of modern

speculation, as worthless and ephemeral, he compared it to the *skin* of a bubble."

"It has been my endeavour," he said once in public, "to keep on the right string, and give it a firm touch; or, to change the figure, I have always given Christ His proper place as the central point of my theology."

A very gratifying evangelistic work had been going on in ——, under the stirring addresses of Mr. Radcliffe, and many conversions had taken place. But a rather lawless entertainment was held in that same place very soon after, which showed that the impression was not so deep and wide-spread as some sanguine friends supposed. "The devils in hell," Mr. Murker said, "were trembling and dismayed, afraid lest —— was going to slip out of their hands. But when that ball occurred, Satan exclaimed, 'Cheer up, ye hosts of hell, —— is ours yet.'"

In giving an account of the famous all-night meeting in Banff, in 1860, he said: "After a while I had to pinch my wrist, that I might know whether I was in the body or not."

Yet he did not lose his head when the revival excitement was at its height. An enthusiastic brother said: "Glorious tidings! a hundred souls converted last night." The calm and sensible reply was: "Hoots, man, the day of judgment will declare that."

"Why are your addresses at the prayer meeting often much better than your ordinary Sunday sermons?" was a question put to him one day. "Man," he said, the reason is plain; you just get the cream without any of the milk."

His long-continued and faithful gospel labours in Macduff had contributed to prepare the way for the formation of a Free Church in that place. He said to Mr. Leslie, who

was the first minister, and who was an intimate and beloved friend—"I helped to warm the skep, and she's come off."

When the members of his own church residing in Macduff had resolved in an amicable way to form a Congregational Church there, he, at first opposed to the project, said, half-humorously, in a conversation with one of the leaders of the movement: "Well, well, if it has to take place, the text of my first sermon is ready: "They which are in Asia be turned away from me."

A young minister wrote to Mr. Murker a letter of reproof, trying to put the old man right in a few things in rather a presumptuous manner. He received a reply by return of post with this sentence in it:—"Yours has just arrived, and I perceive it has in it a great deal of the *young* man, too much of the *old* man, and far too little of the *new* man."

He gave four directions for the right management of the good hope through grace, which were helpful to many persons, and are still gratefully remembered and observed:—1, Make it sure; 2, Keep it clear; 3, Bring it near; 4, Use it daily.

"Is is not strange," said a lady in affluent circumstances to Mr. Murker, "that David should have written: 'I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' I have seen it." "The more shame to *you*, madam," was the prompt rejoinder.

He greatly enjoyed the lofty magnificence and glowing imagery of the prophecies of Isaiah. The oriental exuberance of diction and figure to be seen in many other parts of the Scriptures was a perpetual feast to his imagination. He revelled in those passages in which there is abundance of the warmth and colour of the East. "I thank God," he said, "that the Bible was not written by a Dutchman."

XII

JOHN MURKER'S GARDEN

JOHN MURKER'S playground was his garden. He loved the open air. He was, in the best sense of the phrase, "a child of nature." He was a bird that could not not be caged. Like many fresh and simple natures, he chafed under conventional and artificial restraints; his creature-love of freedom, to the extent of desiring to be as much as possible under the actual touch of nature, was never subdued, nor even tamed. He had a passionate and irrepressible liking for things "out of doors," and regarded stone walls and slated roofs as occasional conveniences in our rigorous and changeful climate, but to be gladly dispensed with, just like greatcoats or waterproofs, whenever wind and weather permitted. It gave him pleasure to feel that there was nothing between him and the blue sky, to stand face to face with life and growth, to come into the immediate presence and under the sweet breath of mother earth, to feast the eye and the ear with the changing aspects and "still reports" of this vast and wondrous material estate, of which, by our Father's will, we are the owners. As indicating the close and lively attention he bestowed upon Nature's successive seasons and changes, it may be mentioned that entries like the following abound in his diaries—"Swallow seen for the first time this season." "Willow-wren not heard yet." "Willow-wren singing vociferously in the garden."

But John Murker was practical and matter of fact as well as poetical. While he was imaginative, no one who knew him would ever dream of calling him sentimental. There were many things compounded in his nature, and a preference for the useful was one. He was accustomed to say that a walk without any errand or destination, a "constitutional," was to him uninteresting and wearisome. So he betook himself to gardening. It has ever been a favourite recreation with the clergy, partly because their choice is so restricted. There are other kinds of exercise and amusement which, though not forbidden to the laity, are not considered conventionally consistent with the gravity and dignity of the clerical profession. So, from the time of White of Selborne, and long before his day, down to Nathaniel Paterson, the author of the "Manse Garden," the occupants of the pulpit have taken kindly to the mild and time-honoured occupation of gardening, and the study of natural objects, as a relief from the labours of reading, writing, and pastoral visitation.

But what minister ever had a garden such as John Murker's? Like himself, it was unique. If any one had an antipathy to the Dutch garden with its trimness and artificiality, and longed for the antipodes of striking contrast, how he could have revelled in the hearty defiance of rule and undisguised repudiation of order and neatness in the arrangement of these vegetables and flowers. It was like Topsy, that was not made, but "specs she growed." Noah's ark in its contents did not have more juxtaposition without assortment than did the products on the space of ground under Mr. Murker's cultivation. It was like one of his diaries, in which are entries about the weather, politics, the state of his dahlias and leeks, and moral reflections, following

each other as parts of a whole. The Scotch dish of sheep's head was once described as a "confused mass of good feeding"; and in like manner one of his neighbours truthfully observed, what the writer has seen with his own eyes, that while things were presented in rather a heterogeneous fashion, yet he brought "good stuff out of his garden."

While far from tidy in his arrangements as a gardener, he was very methodical in his own way, a way that was sometimes very original and droll. For example, he was at great pains to destroy earwigs that infested his dahlias, and he kept a regular register of the number of earwigs caught every day during several seasons! "Earwigs killed on July 20th, 17," etc., etc.

In proof of his successful gardening, it may be stated that between 1854 and 1877 he took no fewer than 479 prizes where his vegetables and flowers were exhibited! There was, therefore, some ground for the boast which he occasionally made, that, if he had been in Eden, he could have beaten Adam and Eve, especially in growing leeks and onions!

When Mr. Murker moved, he moved altogether. He was the whole man at one time. He often said he liked a man to do things heartily, preferring a man who did wrong with his whole soul, to one who was neither one thing nor another, Saul as well as Paul being worthy, so far, of admiration. Taking gardening as a recreation, it gave him additional interest in it when he tried to excel, which he succeeded in doing to such an extent—at least so far as production or output was concerned—as sometimes to excite the envy of professional gardeners. Although he admitted that the garden was occasionally a snare to him, yet he was

not ashamed of his gardening. He often said that there were two things he was quite willing to carry along the streets of Banff any day, and these were his Bible and a flower.

But in the garden grew ideas, as well as dahlias and leeks. It was the place to which he resorted for meditation and sermon-making. He found out that the operations of mind and body could go on together. The abundant oxygen with which the free air of heaven is laden quickened his thought. The ancient Greeks discussed their lofty problems and subtle questions in the grove and by the meandering stream. Burns, in a different clime from theirs, composed mentally some of his best pieces while his hands were upon the plough and his eyes on the furrow. Erasmus, a restless traveller as well as a great writer and scholar, gathered material for his books from the vast stores of his memory while on horseback, and then committed them to writing when he reached his inn. It is admitted, too, by students and admirers of Wordsworth, that much of his dignity and simplicity as a poet, his power of throwing off formality and artificial restraint and keeping close to reality and life, was partly owing to his hardy habits, which made him not unlike one of those dalesmen he respected so much, and whom he has immortalized in song.

Mr. Murker was accustomed to say that exercise in the garden had, humanly speaking, lengthened his days. He was not naturally robust, and his health would have given way under the conditions of life and work in a large town. He was content with his lot. With his moral and material husbandry, there was no man in the kingdom happier than John Murker.

To make the happiness complete, in the garden he reserved to himself the liberty of dressing as befitted the

place and occupation. At no time was he guilty of bestowing excessive attention upon the outer man. The vanity in him, if there was any, did not take that form. The temptations of the dandy or fop did not lie in his way. One day his dress gave more abundant evidence than usual of wear and tear, and, as it happened, a very genteel and rather prim visitor called at the manse, and found his way to the garden. Mr. Murker was somewhat taken aback at the sight of this splendidly attired person; but alive to the humour of the situation, and with an expression half comical and half apologetic, he, in the broad vernacular which he delighted to use in conversation, said—"Would you gie's a pair o' auld trousers?" "I think," said his friend, "you have more need of a pair of *new* trousers."

The garden in the summer-time was made to serve the purpose of a reception and drawing-room. Friends knew that if the weather was favourable, and even when it was not very propitious, he was sure to be found there at certain hours of the day. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to have a chat with a youngster, when he had spade or hoe in hand. "You see," he would say, "I have the hoe often in hand, for the garden, like your heart and mine, is covered over with weeds." One day a youth, with a practical eye, asked why, seeing he had such a large garden and so many flowers, he did not keep bees? The answer was, "Because they aye cast on a Sunday!" He did not fail to remind visitors as the time was advancing:—"By-and-by I'll be sittin' in that seat," pointing to the green-house, "makin' my next Sunday's sermon."

EDINBURGH

XIII

ADAM BLACK, THE PUBLISHER

IN East Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh—"Stately city throned on crags"—between the Scott Monument and the statue of Professor Wilson, there is another statue to commemorate the worth of as good a citizen as ever dwelt within its borders—Adam Black, the publisher.

He had the good fortune not to begin life at the top of the ladder, but by character and ability he reached its topmost rung. The founder of a large publishing business;* one of the foremost and strongest advocates of justice, freedom, and progress, at a time when no small courage and self-sacrifice were required of him who took up such a position; Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and afterwards for ten years Member of Parliament for that city—entering the House of Commons when he was 72 years of age; and all through his long life at the head of every movement for the welfare of his fellows and the progress of his native city—no wonder he was a man whom Edinburgh delighted to honour.

My connection with Mr. Black arose through Augustine Church (Dr. Lindsay Alexander's), of which he had been

*Scottish Independents have distinguished themselves in that most aristocratic of all industries, to mention only the founders of the Macmillan firm, Daniel and Alexander Macmillan, who in early years owed much to our little church in the island of Arran.

a life-long and faithful member, and for many years senior deacon. As such, he took a kindly interest in me when I arrived in Edinburgh to enter upon my ministry in Dalry Congregational Church. One way in which he showed his friendship was to invite my wife and myself to spend a week in his summer residence, Priorbank, Melrose.

An incident of that delectable sojourn, which I recall, was at the breakfast table. The old man was supping his porridge with great gusto, which he had done for the greater part of a century, but his grandchildren did not follow his example. "Ah!" observed the veteran, "you'll not live till you are 90!"

One day he took us in his carriage to see Dryburgh Abbey, and with such a guide, philospher, and friend, and such a hallowed and classic ruin before us, you can believe that impressions came which did not speedily die. There had been rain during the night, and the overflowing piscina showed that it had been abundant. "Come," he said, "and see this holy water: it must be holy, for it has all come from the heavens."

He was indeed what Dr. Chalmers called "a man of wecht." He had few words, but they told. He had his moods and sallies, and to the end was as fond of a little fun as a child. He could tell of strange experiences in his early days. A smuggler came to his shop one day pressing him to buy whisky that "nae gauger kent aboot," and, thinking that money might be scarce with one who had not been long in business, he offered to "tak' Bibles for it!"

It was good for one beginning life to be in close company with such a man even for a week. It was worth a good bit of a session at College. He was not a mere successful business man. He was a man all round. He was a man of

God, who willingly brought his well-disciplined strength to bear upon any side of life that Providence presented to him, and gave himself heartily to it.

I could see, however, that the conservative tendency of years was beginning to tell upon him. He was the old Whig. The temperance question was the only one on which he and I differed. He could not be brought to see that the reduction of the number of public-houses would lessen the amount of drunkenness. His position was, that as was the demand so would be the supply. I had the hardihood to maintain in argument that in such things as intoxicants, the supply and facility, considering the weakness of men, tended to create the demand.

But that was no more than a Jupiter's nod, and many would not admit it was even that. I could not but think, as I watched the workings of that independent and sagacious judgment on all sorts of subjects, what an advantage it is to have been brought up in a Puritan home, where one has been trained to deal personally with religion, and to keep his own conscience, feeling that God is his nearest neighbour with Whom he must daily have intimate relations and direct dealings. The man who has nothing between him and the New Testament, cannot have his personality developed on the same lines as he would have, were he limited to the standards of a Church and the direction of a priest.

One was struck with the self-command of the man, which evidently sprang from perfect loyalty to an absolute sovereignty. His quiet contentment and satisfaction, even in extreme old age, were most marked. He said to me, "I do not agree with the Psalmist when he speaks of fourscore as being a burden and a weariness. Between threescore and fourscore was the happiest period of my life."

Nothing was further from him than the airs and pretensions of saintliness, and yet he was a downright saint, and also a man amongst men. A few days before he died, he had a hearty laugh at a story that was told him about the unconscious heathenism of an old nobleman, who, when dying, was asked if he wished to clear his conscience before he passed into another world: "No," he replied, "I have nothing to express regret about; for, thank God, I have never denied myself anything!"

In sharp contrast to that, listen to the testimony of Adam himself. When he was a young man he went down to Portobello every Sunday evening, in fair weather and in foul, to teach a school of which he had the charge. Hear what he said of that work after he had attained to high public position as Provost, and Member of Parliament:— "This is the part of my life I look back upon with the greatest satisfaction; if I have been of any use to my fellow-creatures, it was here."

XIV

SIR GEORGE HARVEY

THE Duke of Argyle, in his Autobiography, observes that he never saw such perfect correspondence in a human figure between the inward personality and the outward appearance of a man, as what we had in Tennyson the poet.

Can we not also say, in looking at the portrait of Sir George Harvey, the late well-known Scottish artist, that what meets the eye strikingly agrees with our knowledge of the man? You at once perceive a quiet strength that is touched to fine issues, that is unobtrusive and gentle, but still there, and that kind of strength which delights to give effect to itself in the higher reaches of thought and aspiration.

Milton reminds us that the true poet is himself that of which he should be more or less the transcript. So does Ruskin teach us that the artist needs character as well as brains and paint for the highest art. Harvey had the upbringing of a pious home as part of his outfit for his life-work. He naturally had an eye for what was great as well as beautiful in life, and in early days he lived in an atmosphere which was favourable to the outgoing of the sympathies to what was noble in the history of his native land, as well as beautiful in its scenery.

What a favoured Scot, to have had the genius and the inclination to put upon canvas the exalted dreams of his

youth! It is said to be a greater privilege to write the ballads of a country than to make its laws; but is that a higher honour than to be able to immortalize the heroic deeds of one's fellow-countrymen, and thereby help to keep alive the flame of patriotism and religion in the breasts of coming generations?

"Quitting the Manse," the picture of the "Disruption" of 1843, which has a place in the National Gallery, and the three popular Covenanting ones which have also been engraven, not to speak of many others of a general character, will keep his memory green for many a day.

The small independent body in Scotland has sent out its fair share of distinguished men, but it is doubtful if any of them can be put alongside Sir George Harvey for the possession of that subtle, transcendental thing we call genius. He belonged to one of the families in our Congregational Church in Stirling; and the story of his progress from apprenticeship in the bookseller's shop to the presidentship of the Royal Scottish Academy, which he took some part in instituting, does one good to follow.

While most industrious, he did not become the slave of his profession. No one was more alive to his duties as a member and deacon of Augustine Church. The new Congregational Church in Dalry, Edinburgh, to which I was called to be pastor in 1872, was the foster-child of Dr. Alexander's people, and much kindness did I receive at the hands of Sir George. I remember when he gave me a ticket for the annual exhibition of paintings, and I asked him to what pictures I should specially direct my attention; he gave me this advice:—"Go round the room till you come to something that specially appeals to you, and then stand and gaze at it."

Amongst the things which come up as I think of that lovable soul, is his undying interest in children. The only use he made of the sword and uniform of knighthood—which came with his presidentship—was to wear them at a children's party.

When his beautiful life upon the earth came to an end, Dr. Lindsay Alexander, his minister, happened to be in attendance at the Revision Committee in London, and I had to take his place at the funeral service. But when the doctor returned he preached a remarkable discourse, in which, with a masterly hand, he unfolded the rare power of Sir George Harvey as an artist, and the great service he had rendered to his country. I subjoin the greater part of that discourse as reported in the *Scottish Congregational Magazine* for March, 1876 :—

"A peculiar excellence," he said, "attaching to the productions of Sir George Harvey's pencil, was their high moral character. Of his historical paintings every one depicted some scene of deep spiritual interest, and illustrated and enforced some great moral or religious lesson; and when he ceased to occupy himself with such subjects, it was to nature in her serener aspects that he turned, and in the homes and occupations of the dwellers in quiet pastoral regions that he sought the objects of his art. In scenes of calm, natural beauty, amidst the solemn silence of the everlasting hills, he delighted to roam, and such scenes he specially sought to transfer to his canvas. They lifted up his own soul to God, and he sought by his art to make them the means of producing the same effect on others. He delighted also to depict scenes in the common life of men, scenes which had powerfully touched that cord of human sympathy which so strongly vibrated in his own soul. With a deep sense of humour, and with an eye for the ludicrous, both in form and action, he never stooped to cater for the mere amusement of the public, nor did he ever use his skill in such a way as to offend the sensibilities of the most refined. Nothing mean, nothing trivial, nothing fantastic engaged his pencil. In all he did, a high moral purpose was discernible, and his works, if they secured for him the reputation of a great artist, no less commended him as a great moral teacher.

This was wholly in keeping with his general character. Endowed with genius and keen susceptibilities, he was at the same time a man of high principle, of simple and natural tastes, of broad sympathies, of warm affections, and a kindly and genial spirit. . . . Now that he is gone, he will be greatly missed. In the circle of his profession, of which he was an ornament and the head; in the family circle, of which he was the revered and radiating centre; in the wide circle of friendly associations within which he delighted to move, and where his kindly and generous sympathy found congenial scope; in the Church of which he was a member and an office-bearer, and to which he rendered so many valuable services; and in the general society of this city, where his name has so long been a word of pride and honour, his removal has caused a blank which will be long and painfully felt by all, and which to those most closely connected with him can never be repaired."

XV

JOHN PULSFORD

ON a stormy day in March, I was a guest in the home of John Pulsford of Edinburgh, at a ministerial gathering. As the gusty wind and pelting sleet beat upon the dining-room window, our host looked up from the table, and, with his characteristic smile, which was so sweet and heavenly, remarked, "Ah! Yes, it is coming, Summer *is* coming, notwithstanding the wrathful hail; but like everything else that is good, it has such difficulty in getting into our world."

I knew before that I was in John Pulsford's house, now I felt it!

On another occasion, at a meeting of the same fellowship, the subject under discussion was the authorship and genuineness of the Gospel of John. This was Mr. Pulsford's favourite part of Scripture, as those who knew him could have no difficulty in believing, and we all expected, when it came to his turn to speak, something specially striking as well as original.

He did not touch the controversial arguments for or against the Johannine origin of the gospel. There was a unity, he maintained, in the character and teaching of John, brought out in all that is said of him and by him, and in the light of his intense and unmistakable personality thus shown

forth, guidance was to be found for the settlement of the question. I remember so well what emphasis he put upon the wish he expressed that every one interested in this subject should really make it a matter of heart and conscience to read again and again the Gospel of John, and let his soul brood upon it.

At another gathering of the ministers of the city and neighbourhood of Edinburgh, the Resurrection of our Lord was the topic on hand. All present were believers in a risen and historical Christ, but instead of contenting ourselves with the recorded fact that what was put into the grave did not remain there, and by the power of Almighty God came forth, in a form changed and transcendent, some of us tried to be wise above what is written, or at least tried to make the scriptural narrative go farther than it does. John Pulsford did not sin in that way, but some thought he did in the disposition he manifested to slight the importance of the historical testimony of Scripture—a weakness which besets the mystical school—and an altogether unwarrantable indifference to the physical resurrection of our Lord. This caused one of the most painful incidents in our gatherings, and no one was more grieved than John Pulsford, as no one respected the offended brother more than he did. We could not but love the author of "Quiet Hours," for he was ever a brother among brothers, and discord was to him the "abomination of desolation."

These occasions of brotherly fellowship were almost the only opportunities we ministers had of tapping that perennial spring. I do not remember ever meeting him at a committee meeting. Public business was about as far away from him as from a child. He was the very antipodes of his brother William in that respect. With more learning, logical power,

and practical aptitude, Dr. Wm. Pulsford came more to the front—very much at times—in the administration of affairs.

Both brothers lost money through the failure of the City of Glasgow Bank, and when John was called as a witness, to give an account of his experience, his evidence was characteristic :—"I thought it was a bank, but I found to my cost it was a ditch!" (Friends and admirers all over the country, by a united effort, lifted him out of the "ditch").

How he delighted to discourse on the unsearchable riches of Christ. His life-long contention was that Christianity was to a large extent an untried experiment. He held that the great mass of men did not really know what life is, as they kept Jesus Christ at arm's length, and knew no more of Him than what comes indirectly and often unconsciously through a mere environment that was more or less Christian.

Had John Pulsford been alive to-day, as I write, how shocked he would have been to see what a poor tottering thing—a reed shaken with the wind—is Christian environment when the Christian doctrine, by which it was vitalised, is repudiated. "Corsica" may say, "might is right,"—never "Galilee." What a surprise it would have been to him to have seen one part of Europe at war with another, because of a practical revival of Paganism worse than what is associated with that of Julian the Apostate.

The last word I heard from him was a communion address which he delivered at the annual meetings of the Congregational Union, when held in Edinburgh towards the end of his public life. He was speaking of the love of God, the infinite strength and tenderness of his Fatherly compassion, as proved in Christ and His Cross. "You say," he exclaimed, "it is incredible; it is too good to be true." "Nay," he replied to the imaginary sceptic: "It is all the

more likely to be true, because it is so good; now that we know who God is and what He is, we say: 'Wonderful as it is, it is just like Him!'"

There can be no doubt that the elevated and spiritual ministry of John Pulsford in Edinburgh, reaching many who were not members of his Church, and reaching through his "Quiet Hours," many, too, who never heard his voice; brought an element into Scottish thought which had a tempering effect. His later works were more mystical and of a somewhat Swedenborgian tendency, and far removed from the teaching which prevailed in Scotland.

Erskine of Linlathen tells a story of a gardener he had who was a typical Scot of his day, and one of the best. Referring to Dr. McLeod Campbell, who was expelled from the Established Church of Scotland for alleged unsoundness in his setting forth of the great subject of the Atonement —much afterwards to the shame and regret of his brethren— "Nae doot," said the gardener, "he was a very guid man, but he diverged."

So Pulsford "diverged," and did something to mollify the intellectual rigidity of our theology. For one thing he helped us to feel that the spiritual is the only real permanency all things tend to, and of which they were but the fleeting shadow. He spoke of dying as no more than throwing off the greatcoat which had been of use in the gusty weather of this world, and casting away worn and dirty shoes of no further service.

With all the occasional crudeness of his thought and extravagance of his metaphors, especially in his latter days, he ever appeared to those who knew him intimately as one who lived upon the border of another world, and who tried to keep his tabernacle upon the mount. His spirituality

had no false ring in it. You might say he was fanciful and dreamy, but you could not say he was unreal.

We sometimes have in John Pulsford an echo of Wordsworth. Do you not hear it in the following paragraph, with which we conclude our paper, which has been truly a labour of love:—"'Consider the lilies'—If *thou* couldst be a lily before God, for at least an hour in the twenty-four, it would do thee good: I mean if thou couldst cease to will and to think, and *be* only. Consider the lily is as really from God as thou art, and is a figure of something *in Him*, the like of which should also be *in thee*. Thou longest to grow, but the lily grows without longing—yes, without either thinking or willing, *grows*, and is beautiful both to God and man. Think of that."

XVI

SIR JOHN LENG

WE are all familiar with stories of pushing Scotsmen who took the high road to England, and, after years of persevering labour, built up for themselves fortunes and reputations in the sunny south. But we have some cases on record, where the start is made from the other side of the Border, and with a success quite as marked. John Leng was one of the most conspicuous of these.

The man who owned the *Dundee Advertiser*, and established the *People's Journal*, the *People's Friend*, and many other widely circulated publications, must have had some sagacity as well as driving and directing power, and he has given proof that any line of judgment or action he happened to take was at least worthy of respect.

I do not think I ever before or since had the same opportunity of coming alongside a "man of the world," who yet knew what the world was and what was its proper place. The centenary of the Newport Congregational Church was the occasion of my spending several days as his guest, and during that time, many subjects, political, social, and religious, came under review. It was at the time of the South African War, and the man who had gathered fame for unerring shrewdness, ability to "size up" men and events, was under the impression that this would be the verdict of

history regarding that war :—That those in the management of our affairs at home never expected such an issue ; that the just and calm level-headedness of a man such as Bryce, our American Ambassador, and some patience, would have brought to this country all that it wanted, and we should have been spared the horrible and criminal catastrophe of a needless war ; but hot-headedness had its way, and we paid dearly for it. Such was Leng's mind on the much debated matter.

John Leng's character and progress generally afforded material for reflection. He was open ; but not obtrusive, as many so-called "self-made" men are when speaking of the past and how it came to be the present. I once heard an eminent lawyer in Aberdeen (now dead) say at his table that genealogy was not a favourite study to-day, as the plebeian origin of most of our magnates would be made apparent. Leng had no such feeling ; nor did he go to the other extreme, though his house in Newport was called by a facetious public, the "Leading Article."

He owed his extraordinary rise to sheer ability, character, and hard work. There was also a certain measure of good fortune in his prosperity. The time, and the circumstances of the country to which he had migrated, gave a certain opportunity for the circulation of popular literature in the north-eastern parts. He had the eyes to see it, the courage to embrace it, and the knowledge of men and things which enabled him to be a skilful commander-in-chief in this journalistic campaign.

Dr. Barrack, of the Grammar School, Aberdeen, in attempting to explain why so many prizemen at school and college were little heard of when they went out into the world, said they were too content with the laurels they had

won. May there not be other reasons, such as the undermining of strength by too great an effort in early days? But is this not the chief reason—that class-work and life-work do not always bring into play exactly the same kind of power? A retentive and verbal memory may win the highest success in the passing of examinations, but it will not open every gate for a man in the world, though it is a most valuable auxiliary.

Insight, commanding force, instinctive sympathy such as John Leng possessed, may do for a man amongst men what they could not have done in the class-room.

John Leng made no secret of it that he had a great deal to contend with in life. He reached a great age, but he said he was a wonder to himself. He was "often ailing," "below average in health," "never expected to see threescore and ten"; and yet in early days he had to work "sometimes eighteen hours a day."

He laid no claim to high endowments. "Diligence, effort, made him":—the "strenuous life": he "owed all his success to untiring zeal and to attention to detail": "great works are achieved more by perseverance than strength."

But he had a good upbringing, and he attributed much to that. He was baptised by John Pulsford, then a Baptist Minister in Hull, and he gave always the Church and God's Word a place in his life.

He was an abstemious man:—"I always worked by water-power." But he believed in wholesome recreation, and was a great traveller. Up to the end his mind was active, and his interest in all that was around him keen. America, India, and many other countries were visited, and thereby, he maintained, he lengthened his days. Truly he "made as much out of himself as could be made out of the stuff."

But what I like to think of chiefly was one of the reasons he gave me for choosing Newport as a place of residence. Mr. Tait, who had spent the greater part of a life-time in the service of the Congregational Church at Blairgowrie, came to spend his latter days in this suburb of Dundee across the Tay, and the Church there standing much in need of lifting up, he was asked to take the oversight of it.

Mr. Tait was in his own way an able, and certainly a good man; quaint, simple, primitive, but he knew the Gospel and preached it with power. People who loved the truth liked to hear him, as they got something they could live by.

Here was this man, Sir John Leng, noted for his sagacity, who did not hesitate to say that it was one inducement to him to settle down where he did, for the sake of being near a man in whom he believed as a preacher of the Gospel. Comment is unnecessary, but reflection may be profitable.

XVII

DR. MACLAREN OF MANCHESTER

I NEVER heard Dr. MacLaren to such advantage as at the centenary of Augustine Church, Edinburgh, when he preached on the text :—"Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" He conducted the whole of the morning service from beginning to end, and all was so real and vital and incomparably powerful, that I did wish most fervently that he could have taken the evening service as well.

He showed himself to be a "master in Israel," in the very reading of the Psalms. They were read with such expression and feeling, with a due but not overdone emphasis which lit them up and brought them home. It was not elocution that did it, but a fine understanding and sympathetic appreciation of what was in the Scripture before him, to which he gave audible effect.

The prayers were no mere "preliminaries"; they were vital and integral parts of the whole. They were what they professed to be, the reverent, yet free and natural out-pouring of the heart of the child to his Father in Heaven, with the discriminating comprehensiveness required in petitions for a large congregation. You felt it was real prayer; but in addition to the devoutness and fervid spirituality revealed, there was a facility and exactness in expression due to prolonged practice in extemporaneous utterance.

When the discourse was begun, I must honestly confess my attention was divided between receiving what was said for personal edification, and trying to discover the secret of MacLaren's power. That there was power of no ordinary kind there could be no doubt. You could see the subdued throbbing of the power in the preacher. He was kindled, and you could see the glow in his face which was being gradually reflected in his audience.

But it is strange how some hearers are proof against such an influence. They have ears but they hear not. A friend of mine, a young Presbyterian minister, went to Manchester to hear the great preacher in his own pulpit, and was surprised to see a young man—sitting near him—evidently not "in it" at all, for he was turning over the leaves of his Bible in a listless fashion, as if bored and wishing the thing at an end. Yet the discourse was not only of a very high order, but it was so lucid and coherent, so full of illustration and so effectively delivered, that it gave a hearer every chance. But I daresay to not a few minds the Gospel of John would not be interesting, and a discourse founded upon a part of it might be considered as not "up-to-date."

The truth is, spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned, and the text has a wide application. A lady who was an admirer of Wordsworth and a friend of Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*, quoted it in explanation of that clever critic's frank acknowledgment that he could see nothing in the writings of the great poet. Is not humility the first and the last thing in life?

MacLaren's work was that of a preacher, and he lived for it. Other ministers might spend their strength upon a variety of things in Christian work, but he felt he could

best serve the world by devoting himself almost exclusively to this particular line of service.

There was natural aptitude amounting to genius in the man; but there was in addition the severest application of these native powers to bring out the truth that found its way to the heart and conscience, as well as to the understanding aided by the imagination.

His mode of preparation was that adopted by Robert Hall, an inward vital process. The sermon was written in its main parts, but upon inward tablets. It was all carefully thought and mapped out, each division getting its place in the mind, the leading illustrations chosen, and doubtless even the language to some extent ready to spring forth; but all came directly from his own mind to the minds of the people. It was a laborious process, and to most persons would be exhausting, and the amazing thing is that Dr. MacLaren should have seen fourscore, and a considerable part of the time spent in a large city like Manchester.

This mastery was not won without enormous labour, a forth-putting of energy that went on to the end of his days. When he was bordering upon old age, and taking his holiday in a favourite place in the Highlands, he was pressed to preach in a neighbouring Presbyterian Church. "It just meant," said one of his relatives to me, "that two days were taken out of his allotted period of rest." He could not lift a MS. and go into the pulpit with it. He had patiently to work the subject into his soul, and, by brooding and prayer, make it a part of himself.

"What a wonderful preacher," said Dale of Birmingham once, "is MacLaren—he *sees* his subject." Was that not owing partly to his method of preparation? He had to be concrete, vivid, pictorial, in building up his discourse, that it

might be easily recalled. Abstract and logical thinking there was in laying a basis of doctrine, but there had to be many "windows"; and who, that knew MacLaren, was not struck with the boundless wealth, striking originality, and endless variety of his metaphors.

True eloquence has been defined as "logic on fire," and he had it. His voice, with its unmistakable West of Scotland accent after more than half a century's residence in England, was not the highest of the endowments he had received, but he used it admirably.

Some critics complained that Dr. MacLaren had no message for his age. He made it his business to open up and apply the Scriptures, and he did not feel that we needed a new Bible for every generation. Eternity is always in season, and the best preachers in all ages make much of it.

Here is how he defends his general attitude and spirit as a preacher :—

"The true Church must always be remonstrant, protestant, and a standing rebuke to the world, till the world has accepted and applied the principles of the Gospel to personal and social life. We need to keep clear of popular currents of thought and practice, suspecting always that truth does not dwell with majorities, and that what the multitude acclaims, God is likely to condemn. . . . We have to remember that preaching may be as accurately adapted to the times when it directly contradicts popular dicta. No one will ever be the Lord's prophet unless he knows what it is to sit silent before God, and in the silence, to hear the still, small, most mighty voice that penetrates the soul."

XVIII

DR. JOHN KER

JEAN WATSON, a minor but genuine Scottish authoress, was the mutual friend by whom I was introduced to Dr. Ker. She herself was interesting as a native of the Border country, who brought to her adopted home in Edinburgh a nature soaked through every pore with the pathos and charm of its own distinctive literature. The poetry of the Border stood next to her religion as an inspiration and a joy. To her it was a thing, especially the ballads, for the voice and not merely for the eye. Its wild weird ecstasy, touched with plaintive tenderness and full of a music of its own, had to be heard to be felt.

Miss Jean Watson was of a deeply religious as well as poetical spirit, and knew, as few did, the biographical works of the Covenanting and Secession periods, many of which she abridged and popularized, with Dr. Ker's occasional co-operation.

Miss Watson and her sister lived in my immediate neighbourhood in Edinburgh, and dispensed that helpful and rare kind of hospitality which consists in giving you a share in the society of any interesting persons who happen to be under their roof. I was invited to spend an evening with Dr. John Ker, who, along with the better known Dr. John Cairns, represented what was best in Scottish religious thought forty or fifty years ago.

But, strange to say, I have little of a definite and producable nature to show that I was decidedly a gainer on that evening. There is really nothing that stands out distinctly in my memory, except the story of a rich Paisley manufacturer who had built a massive and costly sepulchre for himself. He was an unbeliever, and rather obtrusive in his unbelief; and, taking a friend to see the huge piece of masonry, he said rather jeeringly :—"You see the Angels will have difficulty in getting me up on the resurrection morning." "Oh! no," was the ready reply, "one of them will just come and give it a kick and you'll *fa' doon!*"

Does that tangible recollection as recorded represent Dr. John Ker? Yes, just as much as a stick or a bit of tangle washed ashore represents the ocean beyond. Dear reader, have you never noticed that in trying to bring to the surface of consciousness a discourse you had heard which did you good, you only succeeded in grasping, as something you could tell, a story or a striking illustration? Influence, which makes life and character, is often a very subtle, elusive, and sometimes inscrutable thing. The old woman was not far wrong when she testified that sometimes the sermon that did her most good she was least able to remember. She was like a sheep that was washed; the water was all gone, but the effect remained. So, something came to me from John Ker that evening; and it is there still, though the memory cannot give an account of it any more than it can of a heart-stirring piece of music it has heard.

Years after that, when I was a minister in Aberdeen, I heard Dr. Ker preach on a Fast Day in one of the Presbyterian Churches. The text was Rev. xxii., 20. It was what a sermon ought to be, a feast not so much to the intellect as to the man, in all the various parts of his being. How

many preachers forget that the intellect is no more than the instrumental part of our nature—the end and goal lie in personal experience. Dr. Ker, as might be expected of such a man, had intellect in that sermon, which showed its power in passing all on to the heart and conscience. I have ever since thought of that discourse as a model one, because of the proportion of elements in it, and the high purpose to which everything was made to contribute.

The Christian public has shown its appreciation of Dr. Ker's sermons as issued from the press, by the immense sale they had a generation or two ago. It is doubtful if any sermons have been so widely circulated and so much appreciated in this country, with the exception of those of Newman, and Robertson of Brighton. Thirteen editions of the first volume were exhausted in the course of twenty years, and another volume was prepared for publication when he died.

Amongst the best known and most helpful of his other works may be named "The Psalms in history and biography." If any young man should become owner of "Thoughts for the heart and life" (by Rev. John Ker, D.D.), he will thank me for mentioning it.

Let me close by giving an example of the kind of work Dr. John Ker did and is still doing through his works, which were not as a vehement wind but as the light and the dew. H. C. G. Moule, D.D., now Bishop of Durham, in his "Thoughts for the Sundays of the Year," pp. 143-145, gives testimony to the effect of Ker's writings upon his spirit.

It is not difficult to see what kindles the heart of a man who is experimentally and deeply concerned in the things of God, and not bound hand and foot to any system or hierarchy which oftens perverts the truth or blinds the vision. "One thing is needful!" You cannot keep apart two such

men as Ker and Moule! Whatever be the accidental circumstance which draws them apparently asunder, they belong to the same spiritual company, if you go far enough down in seeking their standing-ground. Here is the testimony :—

"About the time in question I had been reading some pages of a book by the late Dr. John Ker, one of my best-loved authors, a bright ornament not only of the Scottish Church, but of the Church of Christ at large ; a deep, luminous thinker, a man of wide cultivation, and a believing witness to the Lord, who had tasted deep of the trials of both physical and mental pain. I do not remember now what the topic was which he handled in the passages I had read. But I did, and do, remember the living impression left on me by the writer; the depth of insight, the large and tender sympathy, the practical wisdom, the admirable power of suggestion and counsel, and, shining through all, the presence in the man's entire mind of the influence of his MASTER, moulding, animating, giving a character which raised and sanctified the whole.

Then the thought occurred to me that a man like this is, in himself, in what he is, a testimony to the existence and to the character of Christ, of God in Christ. He is no self-originated phenomenon. He is an effect, he is a product, he is a stream ; and as the stream, so the fountain. To begin with, here is a person, a thinking, willing, purposing, understanding person. This stream flows then from a spring which, whatever else it contains, contains at least this, which I observe under my eyes in the stream—personality. Ker, and such as he, great and beautiful as they are in their personality, are, with equal clearness and certainty, not the mere highest results of lower grades of being, with nothing above them, the crown and end of all things. Their very nature is to look up, and to know that 'He hath made us, and not we ourselves.' They come forth, and from a higher source. They are evidences, by what they are, to It.

This reflection is of course at once extended and intensified when we think not only on the phenomenon of a rich personality, but on what we can only call the beauty of holiness of a genuine and deeply taught Christian personality. This is a phenomenon which, we may be reasonably sure, in the deepest sense of the word 'reason,' points upwards to a supreme and *kindred* source. A John Ker is an enigma without an answer, a negation of the highest reason, except as the effect, the product, the child, of a Holy God, Himself beautiful in His holiness."

XIX

PRINCIPAL SIMON

FROM 1884 to 1893 Dr. Simon was principal of the Scottish Congregational Hall in Edinburgh, and during that time members of the Churches had many opportunities of becoming acquainted with him. No one loved study more than he did, but he was no scholastic recluse. He realised that life was a many-sided thing, and that the neglect of one part was an injury or loss to the whole.

Besides meeting him at committee meetings and public gatherings, we could make private engagements with him, when he would spend two or three days for fellowship and service. In this way he became a sort of "missing link" to the entire denomination. The practical weakness of Congregationalism is that it too often becomes individualism and isolation. It was felt to be such an advantage to have a man like Dr. Simon, who was free to visit the Churches now and again, and be a sort of father or bishop to them. He knew his limits, and while full of sympathy and suggestion, he was too much of an Independent not to respect the rights of others. He did not turn "the shepherd's crook into the kingly sceptre."

He was so companionable and so free from airs of superiority, that young men "took" from him what they might have resented from many others. Spending the

night in a certain manse, he asked the minister, who was a beginner, to read one of his sermons to him just as he would to his congregation. Having finished his task, the preacher looked up for the verdict. This was it:—"Well, I have no doubt you are in earnest, but no one listening to you would know it."

Another preacher was anxious to "fill his Church." "I will tell you how to do that," said Simon—"if you practice well standing upon your head in the pulpit you will 'fill the Church'; but if you want to do what you are bidden do—open up the Scriptures and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ—and do it well, you will get persons to come."

He had no objection to new methods and names in our Church work, provided there was no departure from the teaching and spirit of Christ and the Apostles; but the name "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Service" was not to him a happy designation. The intention was doubtless good, but the history of the Church, he maintained, did not tell us of deep and lasting good being done on lines such as were thus suggested.

He had great pleasure in repeating the following story, not as against efforts for betterment in the housing of the people, but as against the notion that material and social advancement has the chief claim upon attention:—"The late Mr. Moir, minister of Albion Street Congregational Church, Aberdeen, was in the company of a medical doctor, and as they passed a huge insanitary tenement in the east end of the city, his companion said:—'What is the use of preaching to people dwelling in such a place?' 'Come,' said Moir, and he took the doctor to a small tenement in that same 'land,' where everything was clean and tidy. 'A year ago,' said Moir, when they came out, 'that place

was like a pig's sty; what has made the difference?—the people are now converted!'"

The "Symposium" gave Dr. Simon his great opportunity in Scotland amongst the ministers. It was a creation of his own. It lives still, but it is not quite the same without Simon. I was at the beginning of it, and knew it intimately when it was really a very considerable means of grace as well as an arena for discussion.

There was something in the "make up" of Simon which fitted him peculiarly for being a leader in a private assembly of congenial spirits met to bring home the highest of all truths to the intellect and heart. He, in his inner structure, was a curious blend of Abelard and Bernard. The men of the two schools are usually found separately; they met and were one man in Simon. He was a thinker, a born theologian, who brought his keen, logical, searching understanding to bear upon the truths of revelation. I have heard him say that metaphysics—probing, sifting intelligence, clear and sharp distinctions in the highest things, followed out—all this had helped to keep his condition right physically, as well as mentally and spiritually.

While he held firmly that keen intellect was a part of human nature which could not be dropped in the treatment of theology, he was at one with the great masters in speaking of the Christian as essentially a believer. Simon was a man in understanding, but a child in faith. I never saw one who was a better example of obedience to the text:—"Prove all things: hold fast that which is good."

He said Amen to the following testimony:—"It has been the defect of religious enquiries for a generation or two, that they have, for the most part, proceeded upon intellectual rather than moral and spiritual lines. Men have not been

agonising to get themselves right with God, but rather have been curious to know about Him. It is the gnostic standpoint rather that the Pentecostal one that is taken. They have not come with troubled consciences and conscious need; but want to discuss a problem."*

The Principal was too clear-sighted and true-hearted a man to be led by any fashion, however numerous its followers. Often have I heard him bemoan the shallowness, deadness, and dangerous tendencies of the times. Because he did so, and did not join the company of those who danced as many piped, he was not "popular." He certainly never came to his own in public recognition. But by those who really knew him, no man was more loved and honoured.

When I recall the distinctive and lovable personality of Dr. Simon (which I have been doing specially through his biography recently published), I think chiefly of him as a man of prayer. He once testified in my hearing, that he knew so well from experience what a quickening effect constant converse with Heaven had upon the whole life, and notably upon the understanding. Simon, with an intellect as subtle as that of a schoolman of the Middle Ages, was as simple as a child in prayer.

The David and Jonathan-like friendship which sprang up between Dr. Simon and Dr. Ross of Glasgow, in their latter years, was just what might have been expected by those who knew both men. I claim to know James Ross,

*One of the many things that have been brought to light by the "great war" which is raging as I write, is that the nation most noted for its speculative treatment of the highest things and its "advanced" philosophy, has made itself notorious in the eyes of the civilised world for unchristian conduct. The "super-man," who has fully developed himself since the simpler days of 1870, has evidently no room in his "culture" for the Sermon on the Mount. Truly "knowledge puffeth up." It is "love that edifieth."

originally of Elgin, if any one does; but in ways too personal and sacred for public print. The best of the man is not known and cannot be known by a detailed account of his prominent denominational activities.

But it is a compliment to both men, and it is sincerely given, that there was much to draw them and bind them fast to each other, as the biography just published abundantly shows;—restless activity and independence of mind, which gave them not only the habits of students, but the resolution and enterprise of fearless thinkers; unfeigned piety never obtrusive, but never far away; self-forgetting loyalty to any cause with which they were identified, and quenchless ardour and faithfulness in love and friendship.

Dr. Simon had a busy pen. Among the many works which issued from it may be mentioned:—"The Bible, an Outgrowth of Theocratic Life," and "The Redemption of Man," which will keep its place in the literature of the Atonement.

XX

PRINCIPAL RAINY

DURING the latter part of his life there were few public men more grievously misunderstood, and in some cases wickedly maligned, than Dr. Rainy. There are some who forget that there is a commandment from Heaven expressly given against bearing false witness; or at least they do not seem to be at much pains to avoid breaking it. Great is the power of prejudice and many are the sins committed by ignorance and shallowness which often lead to rashness of judgment; and men who thought themselves very shrewd and penetrating were as far away from a just estimate of Rainy's character as it was possible for them to be. He was in their eyes a mere "astute ecclesiastic," concerned only about the success of his party—that was too much the parrot-like cry of the day.

Character is often complex in a rich personality, or rather appears to be so; and, not having the mind to perceive or more generally the patience to study the diverse properties, we too frequently content ourselves with a crude analysis, in which simplicity is introduced by dropping out some of the essential elements.

That was done to Dr. Rainy. The facts of his life as brought out in his biography, and as known long before it was published by many who could not be classed amongst

intimate friends, show him to have been emphatically a man of high principle, one who had that as his chief distinction, and next to that, breadth of vision and sympathy.

There was in him the rare union of the simple childlike heart with the quick subtle intellect, and that is a troublesome equipment to carry in the face of an easy-going and uncharitable world. Gladstone found it so in Parliament, and so did Rainy in the arena of ecclesiastical assemblies, and in public life generally. There are some who cannot excuse a pious man for being intellectually able. They will accept his piety, but only on condition of his super-eminent power being denied; or, if the power be admitted, the piety must go.

It was the lot, some would say the cruel fate of Dr. Rainy, who did not take the responsibilities of life lightly, to have the leadership of the Free, now United Free Church upon him at a time of transition and controversy in relation to many questions, particularly that of Biblical criticism. Professor Robertson Smith had forced that to the front; but it was indeed in the air. In the interests of truth and liberty, and to prevent dissension in the ranks of the Church, Dr. Rainy had to come in as a mediating force between the conflicting parties.

As was to be expected, the course Dr. Rainy took in dealing with this critical matter did not satisfy some who took a less statesmanlike grasp of the situation. A great many things had to be taken into account, and it turned out, as it sometimes does in life, that the choice was confined to the least of two evils.

The lapse of time has now permitted personal and party feeling to cool down, and enabled candid minds to take a calm, comprehensive view of the events of that exciting

period, with the result that the wisdom of the course Dr. Rainy pursued is not now questioned by many.*

Towards the end of his life, when he was only two or three years from fourscore, Dr. Rainy had, as leader, to meet a crisis—the greatest which had overtaken the Christian Church in Scotland since the Reformation, with perhaps the exception of the Disruption. It is seldom indeed in any society that one man is of such pre-eminent ability in leadership and unchallengeable loftiness of character that all its members willingly put themselves in his hands, and with the utmost confidence and also gratitude, accept him as their representative and the guardian of their interests.

The feeling between him and them during the cruel suspense, and his calm, gracious self-restraint and yet firm and noble resolve, were a fine sight. The attitude he took as a Christian statesmen was an object-lesson to the nation, and was fitted to put partisanship and bitterness to shame. The man rose higher than ever, in the management of an ugly business which brought no credit to any that had a hand in its origin.

The decision in the House of Lords in 1901 that the entire property of the United Free Church was to be handed over to a small seceding minority which could no more administer it than it could fly to the moon—that decision will yet get its due place in the annals of Scotland, as the greatest miscarriage of justice and most ludicrous blunder

*Here are Carnegie Simpson's words in his biography :—"Judgment once bitterly adverse to Principal Rainy's treatment of William Robertson Smith has become remarkably modified. I have been surprised indeed (having gathered opinions from many quarters in the preparation of this chapter) to find how much this is the case among those representative to-day of learning and even advanced criticism in the Church."—The Life of Principal Rainy, Vol. I., p. 398.

ever perpetrated in our law courts, at least in our time. Dr. Rainy was correct when he said it was a judgment "so astonishing that nobody defended it." He might also well add—It was "not good for a country when the law came into such violent collision with the general sense of the community." Sir Walter Scott makes one of his characters say that a deliverance in court that is sheer nonsense "may yet be very good law." All that can be said in reply is, that if the constitution of the country is to be guarded by the reverence of the people, the less of that kind of "law" we have the better.

One of the most pleasing memories of my public life is that a fortnight after the House of Lords, by its decision, had outraged the common sense as well as the Christian feeling of the nation, I ventured, as a Scotchman and a Congregationalist, in two Sabbath evening lectures which were printed, to protest against the wrong done to a sister Church, and to maintain that things could not be allowed to remain as the House of Lords had left them; Parliament was bound to find a way out of the impossible situation. It did. It is the glory of our land that Equity is generally within speaking distance of "Law."

Dr. Rainy was one of Scotland's great men, as was shown at the end as well as in earlier years. Dr. Taylor Innes, in his own choice language, thus describes the sunset of a noble day :—"He now walked among us visibly the citizen of a higher country, and from the threshold of old age gazed out habitually on a larger world with the wondering eyes of youth. He was ever above hope to rise or fear to fall. The world had nothing to give him, and he had nothing to ask from it except that which God gave him through nature, love, and duty. One of the great delectations of age is that

you are less dependent upon the world, and ever disposed to take the place of a donor rather than a recipient. What above all things sustains your desire to go on is the desire to communicate of what you have for the world's good."

XXI

DR. JAMES MORISON

CONSIDERING my age at the time, it can easily be believed that my personal knowledge of Dr. Morison and the other champions of the "New Views," the keen discussion of which was part of my family heritage, was not what it afterwards became. I belonged to the "other side of the house" in the controversy, and my men of "light and leading" were Dr. Wardlaw, Greville Ewing, Dr. Lindsay Alexander, and others throughout the country such as Munro of Knockando (the son of hydropathic fame—a Nathanael—was as strong on the other side), whose names were as household words to me; and who absorbed so much of my reverential regard as to leave too little, I fear, for the most conspicuous merit not on the "right" side.

Was that so uncommon at the time? Encompassed as we all are with infirmities, is it not true at all times that we see but in part, especially so as Scotchmen, in the thick of a heated theological discussion? It needs breadth and magnanimity, begotten of maturity of experience and reflection, to see things as they really are.

Dr. Morison came to his own, as most men do. It was so evident to those who had any discernment that he was no mere scholastic pedant, no self-willed polemic whose joy lay in the fight; no proud, daring thinker, who was concerned

only to show how he could put the world right in its conception of the highest things; but a man of large grasp of mind, who loved his fellow-creatures, and was impatient under the artificial restraints put upon God's grace for the human race in Christ Jesus which arose from traditional misinterpretation of Scripture.

The first personal glimpse I had of Dr. Morison was in his own church in Dundas Street, Glasgow, where I heard him preach. I remember the part of the gallery, to the left of the preacher, where I sat. I recall, in a general way, a description, vivid and picturesque, of the city of Corinth, which was an introduction to a discourse on a text chosen, I think, from the early part of the first epistle to the Church in that city.

What chiefly captivated my juvenile taste, as least so far as memory aids me now, was the rich imagination and the irresistable fervour. He had, it was evident, not a little of the flame of the poet in him, and he could have been an orator as well as a theologian if the vocal organs had been equal to the strain. Over and above all that, there was a general sense of power as I looked and listened. Sitting in that pew I felt I was in the hands of a strong man. My acquaintance afterwards with his expositions in the Epistle to the Romans, and his commentaries on the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, confirmed that impression.

The next time I saw and heard him was on the platform of the Independent Church in Forres, and the first sentence of his speech was a quotation from Shakespeare's "Macbeth": —"How far is't call'd to Forres?" The only drawback to my pleasure, and a serious one, was that I had to stand up beside him and deliver an address as a neighbouring minister. I was a beginner in Elgin, and I needed encourage-

ment. Dr. Morison gave it to me, and his fatherly kindness knit my soul to him.

Was not his largeness and warmth of soul so far the explanation of his liberal theology? Like the Apostle Paul, he was an evangelist before he was a theologian. The systematic study and scholarly exposition of the Scriptures of grace received their inspiring motive and impelling power from his impassioned desire to hold forth a free offer of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

To my mind the chief excellency, the grand distinction of Dr. Morison was that the fire of heaven was in his soul. What lay behind his scientific study of the Scriptures was his lofty conception of the character of God, and his deep sense of the need of man. In the Providence of God he had a great scholarly work to do, and it was done, as he was well equipped for it; but I believe if he had not been confronted at the outset of his Gospel ministry by the narrow, cramping, theological views which prevailed, and the way had been clear and open, his mind might have taken another direction.

Dr. Morison was above everything a great preacher; and, while owing to physical limitations the world did not get the full benefit of what was in him, yet it came out more or less even under the conditions which Providence had imposed. How full of life and fire are his theological writings, and in that respect so unlike the formal treatises, with their detached thinking, which come from the pen of the ordinary divinity professor. In him the man is never hidden in the divine, the heart keeps company with the intellect, and comes leaping forth unexpectedly with its kindling touch; and all is made subservient to the Universal Evangel.

The next time I met Dr. Morison was at the ordination of a young minister in Edinburgh. His presence and word

lifted such an occasion above what was formal and commonplace. I remember one of his felicitous phrases in bidding the young pastor God-speed :—"You are now standing before your future."

Dr. Morison himself, as an old man, was at this time standing before his future too, but it was a future where the sword was to be exchanged for the palm; and the two futures belonged to one glorious and blessed unity—fellowship with Christ.

The last witness I have to bear regarding Dr. Morison comes through a worthy citizen of Lerwick, long since deceased, who owed what was most precious in life to the young probationer's labours when he was in Shetland. He longed to see once more the man who had done so much for him. It would perhaps have been better if he had been content with the recollections of early days. The contrast between the burning Seraph of forty years ago and the mature methodical preacher in advanced life and broken health, was a shock.

In the vestry after the service, my friend ventured to put the rather inconsiderate question whether Dr. Morison thought such preaching would do as much good as what he gave in Shetland. The Doctor knew that no unkindness was meant, and he met the pardonable unreasonableness by saying :—"Well, all I have to say is this, that if I had continued to preach as I did then, I should have been in my grave long ago!"

The genius of the "New View" movement, so closely associated with the name of Dr. Morison, was well represented after he was gone by three men whom I "met," two of whom I knew intimately :—Fergus Ferguson, George Gladstone, and William Adamson. They did not forget

that the Evangelical Union, now united with the Congregational Union Churches, had as its distinctive note enlightened practical and aggressive Evangelicalism. Their religion was as little notional or pragmatical as it was ecclesiastical. It was to them not a mere aspect of polemical theology to be set forth upon the house-top, not a shibboleth of debating sectaries; but the battle-cry of the vanguard of soldiers of the Cross.

What a touching message we received from Dr. Adamson, as chairman of the Congregational Union, a few days before he died, on :—"Jesus Christ, His presence and work in the Church, and in the world." It was the large catholic utterance of a veteran who had done his part in his day for one of the tributaries of the River of God which is full of water; but now, at the end, he thought mainly of the River itself, which is held in common with all the members of the household of faith.

XXII

W. E. GLADSTONE

IT was in the height of the memorable Midlothian campaign—that high water-mark of political enthusiasm in Scotland in the 19th century—that I heard the great Gladstone; and the particular speech I listened to was the one in which he made the uncomplimentary allusion to Austria, which was viewed by some critics as bordering upon an offence against diplomatic propriety.

Not that the impeachment could be denied; and the action of Austria at the time made it relevant. The amazing thing was that in such a ready flow of words, with such a world-wide range of topics demanding his attention, and such burning sympathy with the oppressed, he did not more frequently give occasion for the censure of the enemy.

I was sitting right in front of the platform—Music Hall, Edinburgh—and was favourably situated for hearing and seeing the orator, for eye as well as ear was fully engaged. There he was—the grand old man, full of life and energy—and his wife by his side. He was at the time entering upon his seventies, and the performance, as one of similar physical feats during the candidature, was marvellous. He had the fire and the bearing of a man not past middle-age, not to say youth, and his speech seemed to cost him as little as the lark pouring forth his song or the flowing tide shedding its waves.

All was so spontaneous, almost inevitable. In looking and listening you felt this was no official performance, no mere concerted and prescribed deliverance of policy. It was a man wrestling with the problems of his time as if they belonged to his own personal life, and that he in dealing with them was in conscience bound to draw upon all the resources which God had given him. It is said that he was always in better health when in office than when out of it, and this exhibition of exuberant energy made me believe it.

The eagle-like eye, which he flashed upon his audience, and the silvery toned voice—the finest I ever heard except Spurgeon's—were the outward ensigns of rare prowess of mind and character, which even his bitterest foes could not gainsay. Some one said that Gladstone was "an ardent Italian in the custody of a cautious Scotchman." John Morley improved upon that by describing him as "a Highlander in the custody of a Lowlander." Dr. James Ross of Glasgow was with me in the Music Hall on that day; he remarked, I remember, that Gladstone's bodily figure was that of a Scotchman.

What impressed me most of all in his speech was the singular blending of the chivalry of the knight with the masterly shrewdness of the business man. What scorn he had for what was selfish, mean, and cruel! I think I see him yet, stretching out his right hand as if pointing to a map, as he challenged any one to name a part of Europe which had been benefited by the intervention of Austria.

No wonder Gladstone was hated by those who had a personal interest in the continuance of evil things. He was their sworn enemy, in so far as they lay in his path. The Naples government of the old dark days, the Vatican, the

perpetrators of the Bulgarian Atrocities (let us hope that the "bag and baggage" policy he advocated is at last to be carried out), and the enemies of progress at home—all hated Gladstone because he hated wrong, which they, in some form or another, wanted to favour.

Personally, I cannot forget the treatment he received from the baser sort of his opponents in Parliament, at the time when I began to pay attention to politics. It opened my eyes to the fact that the courtesy of the true knight needs more than social refinement and intellectual culture to give it the right ring.

The next thing which impressed me as a witness of this herculean effort was the self-control of the man under all the surging excitement. He seemed to be in his element, and to be himself. The opposition he met with was only so much fuel to the engine, to give added power.

You could see, too, that a moral strain was running through it all. John Stuart Mill said he never met a man like Gladstone, who had such a passion for putting things right. In recalling the impressions of that day in Edinburgh, I think of Lord Salisbury's complimentary epithet—"a great Christian statesman," applied to him at his death. There were statesmen, such as Bismarck, who failed to appreciate the just and humanitarian spirit of Gladstone; and that was because they had less of the New Testament flavour in their state-craft. (But what wears longest?)

What grace along with strength in that speech! He did not tear a passion to tatters. He was resolute, impassioned; but no expression fell from his lips unworthy of him who tried to "honour all men."

Besides on the occasion described, I heard him in the Music Hall, Aberdeen, when he received the freedom of

the city, and I also saw him in the House of Commons. Furthermore, I have one or two personal links with him which I mention. During the five years I was minister in Edinburgh, I was editor of the *Scottish Congregational Magazine*, and when Mr. Gladstone's administration came to grief in 1874, I had the boldness to write an article in the magazine upon "The Election and Mr. Gladstone." It was, of course, of a non-partizan character, but it did not shrink from giving an estimate of the character of the defeated politician, who was more to Scotland at the time than any other living man.

I sent a copy of the magazine to Hawarden; the letter I received in acknowledgement, I am very sorry, is lost; but I remember one sentence that was in it, to the effect that he could never forget the loyalty which his administration had received from the Scottish people.

Another link of a kind which I have with him is through my "John Murker." I learned there was a copy of that book in the library Mr. Gladstone had founded, with a great deal of his own marginal writing upon it. Curious to know what the great man had written, I asked my friend the late Mr. Edmond of Aberdeen, and latterly of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, on visiting St. Deiniols, to examine the copy of "John Murker" and tell me the result. Here it is :—

Wigan, 19th March, 1904.

"... I asked for your book which was at once brought to me, and with the warden's permission I copied the notes which I found in it. I had to promise that the notes should not be published in any way, and I must ask you to conform to that promise. ... There are many markings all through the volume, words and passages underlined or marked with a line in the margin, marks of exclamation and interrogation, evident marks of assent and approval, in fact it is

clear to the most superficial observer that Mr. Gladstone must have read the book with great care and attention. On the fly-leaf at the end is a brief index or contents which Mr. Gladstone was in the habit of making in books in which he was interested. It is as follows . . .

I am, etc."

You can well believe that this so-far "sealed letter" is a treasure to me! Am I not rendering a public service in giving what is permissable of it, as illustrating the greatness of this man in little things? What other public man of the day could you think of as spending so much time upon an obscure book from the far north?

ABERDEEN

XXIII

DR. DAVID BROWN

WHEN memory recalls the late Principal Brown, as I most frequently saw him, I think of a man with a large head and a broad chest, who, though not of high stature, did not give you the impression of littleness—with a book under his arm, passing quickly along Union Street, Aberdeen, as if to his College class, and bending forward as though eager to reach his students.

He always seemed to have something on hand; and yet he was quite approachable, if you really had something on hand with him. There he was—active, radiant, with high self-respect and deep humility. You felt as you looked at his keen and yet benign countenance that he could meet nothing which he knew to be good that would not have his sympathy.

There was an alertness even in advanced age, a vivacity —yes, and an air of distinction in the whole man which caught the attention and awakened the interest of the most casual stranger.

But even after you were admitted into his friendship and knew him intimately, it was difficult to say what you did know chiefly. You knew he was a native and a much respected citizen of Aberdeen, a venerable figure in the Free Church of Scotland, the Principal of the Free Church

College in the city, and that he was a skilled exegete to the student, and a much appreciated Scriptural commentator to the people.

But in that long enumeration, what Dr. Brown was chiefly valued for is not reached. It was the undoubted Christian man behind all those offices and qualifications that we prized. It was his radiant face and benevolent heart, his responsiveness to what was true and noble, which made him so precious in our eyes. He had a soul, and it could not be hidden wherever he went. He had a pleasure in going out to whatever touched his lively and well-trained sympathies. He, too, could say with the ancient worthy, "Nothing that is human is foreign to me."

But such independence, breadth, and originality did not always win the favour of the conventional and worldly-minded. You knew where to find him if you were expecting nothing more than the leadings of God's Spirit; but if you looked for unbroken deference to custom, you were likely to be disappointed. He always held there were some things of higher moment and more august authority than the rule of fashion. He exalted and gripped the essential and the spiritual, and kept everything else in its subordinate place; therefore he was called eccentric by the votaries of prevailing opinion and prejudice, who identified the Way of Life with the ruts which years had made.

While many were standing back, wondering whereunto this would grow, he, with his native ardour and the insight which the true heart gives, believing it to be of God—threw himself into the thick of the Revival of 1859-60. Besides taking his share in the general work of the movement, along with Radcliffe, Brownlow North, Grant of Arndilly, Duncan Mathieson, and some ministers of the town, he gave up

precious time from his favourite studies that he might put himself alongside the young men and women of the city, as their higher teacher and guide. For twelve long years after that great spiritual enlargement he conducted an undenominational class on Sabbath mornings in Marywell Street School, for the confirmation of their faith and the widening of their knowledge. I know nothing that impresses me more with the man's sincerity than what I have just stated.

Such a man as Dr. David Brown, so conspicuously associated with the movement, made rant and fanaticism impossible; and during that time of spiritual elevation and glow, it was not far from the truth for some in the north-east of Scotland to say that "every Sabbath brought a new Heaven and every Monday a new earth."

Many years afterwards, the testimony was given in the assembly of the Free Church of Scotland by one who had been appointed as an official visitor, that many genuine and stalwart converts to God in Aberdeen traced their conversion to that time. Dr. Brown, who was present, could very fittingly and gratefully corroborate what had been said about the reality and power of that work of God.

Dr. David Brown's example is another added to the list to prove that nothing makes a man so liberal and broad—not lax and slack—as the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What links him to Christ links him to men. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, coming with kindling effect, comes as the unfailing ground of catholicity and humanity. This grand, central, sovereign force, in the heart of Brown, drew him into correspondence with all sorts of men who "held the Head," such as Cardinal Newman and James Martineau.

To some critics of a different order of mind, this action of Dr. Brown did appear somewhat strange—indeed far

fetched and forced, if not vain. No, not vain—open, child-like, warmly responsive.

To him all that was perfectly natural. I heard him describe a scene that took place on the platform of York Railway Station which shows how unconstrained such approaches were to Dr. Brown. Father Comper of St. Margaret's Aberdeen and he were pacing up and down waiting for the London train to start; but as they were not accustomed to speak to each other when they were at home, neither did they at first do so now. At last Dr. Brown could bear the constrained reserve no longer. He went up to the "Father," holding out his hand, and said:—"This is too absurd: you know me and I know you to be from Aberdeen: let us shake hands."

Persons at the other end of the ecclesiastical scale, such as the Congregationalists, were just as heartily welcomed if they could meet him at the Cross. In a lecture to his students, he claimed a high place in the history of the Church of Scotland for the work done by the early Independents.

But at the same time he was a defender of the faith against all comers, rationalistic and sacramentarian. His motto was "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." How beautifully this comes out in his relations with Edward Irving, whose assistant he was in early years.* He held his own against Irving's extravagant and unscriptural notions; but it is also just as evident that his heart was entirely won by that misguided man of genius, who, in his misplacement of truth, never faltered in his allegiance to his Lord and Master.

*In this connection, I have heard Dr. Brown say that when he was at work in London he heard Rowland Hill preach. That renowned man was born before the Scottish Rebellion of 1745; thus, as I write, three lives cover a space of 170 years.

Dr. David Brown was a physical prodigy. When he was born he was such a puny creature, it is said, that his aunt, Mrs. Dyce, actually prayed that he might be taken from a world in which he was too feeble to live—and yet he lived to be ninty-four years of age!

And it was not mere existence. He was a sunny old man. He was so cheerful that he could make a joke about his physical infirmities. He said latterly that he was "like the heathen gods described in Scripture, who had eyes but they saw not, ears but they heard not," but, he added, he could not say that he had a "tongue and spake not." He was so lively almost to the end of his long life. "Is old Principal Brown still stepping about?" was asked of one from the north. "No," was the reply, "he is *running* about."

One of the ways in which he can best be kept in remembrance is by the frequent use of his commentary on the Gospels. Besides erudition and lucidity it has the rare qualities of unction; and yet he was not an "unctuous" man.

XXIV

DR. ANDREW MURRAY OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE person bearing the above name is well known and much revered as a remarkable spiritual force in South Africa; and, through his books and occasional presence, in other parts of the world. By nature and grace, Aberdeenshire had a hand in the making of him. He came of a good stock that is honoured in these northern parts. When he was a student, it may be mentioned, he was brought under the influence of W. C. Burns, who happened then to be in Aberdeen.

He has kept up his connection with the land of his fathers during all those years (his 86th birthday was observed not many months ago). Nearly a score of years ago he visited his friends, and had a series of public meetings which produced a deep impression. I tried at the time to give expression in print to my appreciation of the man, and what was written then is now reproduced.

I do not think I ever heard a preacher who put so little between his audience and the Divine Message which he was evidently commissioned to deliver as Andrew Murray. He is emphatically a man of God, and speaks as if heaven were nearer and more real than earth. While you cannot but see that he is a man mighty in the Scriptures, and has abundance of illustration drawn from common life, yet the

one thing that absorbs your attention in listening to him is "the one thing needful." When his magnetic personality is beyond the reach of eye and ear, and you begin critically to analyse the secret of the spell which he laid upon your spirit, you find nothing very remarkable about the man himself; he is simple, unassuming, and grave; yet he has not spoken ten minutes before you feel he has grasped you as firmly as one creature can grasp another, and that, too, in the highest part of your nature. It is not rhetoric; mental resource and the affluence of imagination cannot account for this marvellous impressiveness; it is bare, naked, intense spirituality passing through a human channel truly sympathetic, which comes up to you and in the name of God seeks a place in you. Many preachers are like a river meandering through a rich and picturesque valley, and there is much that strikes the attention besides the water that is flowing. But Andrew Murray is like a limpid mountain stream that has just emerged from its mysterious recesses, and, leaping from crag to crag in its eager and impetuous onset, projects its heavenly-illumined jet into the air as if disdaining all earthly bank or channel. His seraphic fervour and gracious gentleness help us to realise what McCheyne was to his generation, and as a preacher he brings those giants of the Covenanting period, Samuel Rutherford and Bishop Leighton, a little nearer to us of the present day. Like them, our kinsman from Africa is a theologian, but of the experimental school. Their genius is not in him; but there is the same adoring wonder in looking upon God in Christ, the same intense awe-inspiring realisation of unseen things, the same trembling urgency and tearful tenderness in pleading with men for God. The man has a passion for the higher things of God, as things that ought to be in the heart and life of men. If there is such a

thing as a prophet in these days, he is one, for he speaks like a man who has just come from the presence of the Lord, or rather, still stands reverently in it and lovingly wrestles with you that he may take you away from the desert place of unbelief to the uplands of divine life where is rest and joy.

XXV

JOHN PILLANS OF HUNTLY

DR. HANNY, once of Castle Street Church, Dundee, latterly the renowned secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, the early and fast friend of John Pillans—both of them having been natives of Annandale—often recalled the circumstances of their first meeting. Pillans was found bent over a table with "Butler's Analogy" spread before him, immersed in the study of it. All who knew John Pillans knew that he was a thinker, and one who tried to get at the heart of things.

His intellect was searching; but his heart was restful. John Morley says the present age is not so much active as restless. If so, Pillans was a decided exception. He had the restfulness of faith. But while faith was the master-thing, he was ever working philosophy and poetry into its service. I have heard him say exultingly—his face glowing with his words—that the Solway Firth, the hills round about his native place, and all the vast features and operations of nature to which he had access, were to him in his youth what miracles were to those who saw Jesus Christ in the flesh, signs of God's salvation-power! If God could do so much for nature, what could He not do for him?

After he became a student in the Scottish Congregational Hall, I heard him preach a sermon on Elijah's words :— "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him : but if Baal, follow him." I was but a small boy at the time, and how that one discourse of the period has remained so vividly with me I cannot explain. I remember yet the face of the preacher in the pulpit, so full of seriousness and tenderness.*

When his scholastic studies were finished he was sent as pulpit supply to Duncanston Congregational Church, where one of the professors of our Theological Hall, Rev. G. F. Simpson, began his public ministry. It was at that time, before the ebbing tide of depopulation set in so strongly, one of the many Aberdeenshire rural Congregational Churches which did good service to the general cause of Evangelism, as was shown in the Disruption of 1843, and in the large number of ministers and missionaries they sent forth.

Many jibes have been uttered against Aberdeenshire religiously. Early last century the county was called the "Dead Sea of Moderatism," and it was asserted that it had not produced a single martyr. But a little Church within a few miles of Duncanston was known to have given twenty men to the ministry at home or abroad. The Gospel was preached there !

At the time of Mr. Pillans' visit the members of the Duncanston Church were divided on the Morisonian

* He had some remarkable men as fellow students. Amongst others, Mr. Robbie, who, in his latter days, went back to the Hall as one of its professors. He had a penetrating and original mind. If his delivery had been equal to his matter and literary form, his reputation in the pulpit would have been of the highest. Dr. Alexander once said in my hearing : "Mr. Robbie has a genius for style." He served the Churches of Kirkcaldy, Fraserburgh, and Dunfermline.

controversy.* But, strange to say, they were united in him as a preacher. That was certainly not owing to any facility he had in acting the part of "Mr. Facing-both-ways"; but it might be traceable to the vagueness of his presentation of such transcendental doctrine. I do not suppose he would go the whole length with either Calvinist or Arminian. In certain regions of thought he, like not a few in the present day, had more faith in spiritual intuition than in logic. He was very much a practical mystic.

He was called to Perth some time before the Revival of 1859-60, and some who did not know the man may be surprised to hear that he was used mightily in that work. He, at that time, often did what we all ought to do more frequently—preached in the open air. Preaching on one of the Inches in Perth on the words "Follow me," a minister from one of the neighbouring parishes discovered, on listening, that he had never begun to do what he should have done before he took the vows of a herald of the Cross. He held John Pillans in honour ever afterwards as his spiritual father.

No man could have been more beloved than was our friend in Perth; but he was induced to accept a call to the large and influential Congregational Church in Camberwell, London. It was a most remarkable circumstance that the two previous ministers of that Church, Orme and Burnett, had been in succession Congregational pastors in Perth.

Camberwell Church needed a preacher who had more vocal and general popular power than Mr. Pillans possessed.

*It is interesting to note that about a quarter of a century earlier, James Morison, whose theology was causing division in Duncanston Church, entered upon his work as probationer-preacher to the little Secession Church in the Cabrach, about twenty miles west from Mr. Pillans' present lodge in the wilderness. In that sequestered spot he had a memorable spiritual experience, of which particulars can be found in his biography.

But he was greatly respected, and those who came into close touch with him in his Bible Class, where he was a singular power, loved him as a dear and life-long friend.

The following story shows how Camberwell gauged him. Mr. Pillans was present one night at the Young Men's Society when a discussion took place on the advantages of competition. Illustrating the possible evils of competition, he put in a qualifying word, and said :—"Going home from the railway station, a boy offers to carry my bag. A sixpence I take to be the proper recompense for the work to be done. But there are half-a-dozen boys clamouring for the job, and each, to get it, is willing to do it for a penny. I employ one of them at his own terms, with the result that I have fivepence in my pocket which ought not to be there."

"No, no, that is not what would have happened in the circumstances," said one of the members:—"you would have given each of the boys a sixpence, and carried the bag yourself!"

In 1875, Mr. Pillans was appointed along with Dr. Mullens, the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society, to visit the mission stations upon the island of Madagascar and bring back a report as to progress that was being made. He left behind him, amongst the Malagasy, a very profound impression as to his kindliness of heart. The natives noticed that he always came out of his palanquin on approaching a hill, to lighten the burden of the carriers. They called him Mr. Pilansy, *i.e.*, the gentle-spirited man. The sermons he preached while there, to missionaries and other English-speaking people, were remembered long after he had left the island.

Mr. Pillans' last sphere of public labour, where he was for thirteen years, was in Huntly Congregational Church.

The Rev. Robert Troup, of honoured memory, who was himself the faithful pastor of the Church for twenty-eight years, in his "Missionar Kirk," tells the remarkable story of the origin and testimony of this spiritual community. For sincerity, simplicity, and grip of the truth, John Pillans was indeed in the succession.

Personally, I cannot think of the Clashmach we ascended together, and the walks Mr. Pillans and I often had by the Deveron and the Castle, without calling up the talk of the man, which was always fresh and lofty. He was a tower of strength at our "Association Meetings." We called him "the ministers' minister." He was always like a coin just come from the mint.

If ever unaffected piety and heavenly simplicity were enshrined within stone walls it was in that hospitable manse. He personally never seemed to be in need of anything; he had the bearing of one whose perpetual function it was to give and to serve.

The tidings of the death of Mr. Pillans reached me when I was in London attending the meetings of the first International Convention of Congregational Churches. There and then I wrote down my impression of the man: "Pillans, what lovable individuality! What force of character a man has, who is much with God and seeks much from Him. He is an original fount of power."

XXVI

D. K. AUCHTERLONIE OF CRAIGDAM

MANY of those who remember the trenchant letters from the pen of the Rev. D. K. Auchterlonie, which appeared in the daily newspapers some years ago, will perhaps think of him as a fierce man of war, who had very considerable pleasure in wielding formidable weapons, which were always at hand. Indeed I have heard him stigmatised as a "firebrand."

Such a conclusion only shows that it is not always safe to judge by the outward appearance. As a matter of fact, Auchterlonie was most unassuming and one of the kindest of men, sorely handicapped in the out-goings of a genial nature by his inveterate deafness.

But he was a lover of the truth, and valiant for it. No one would ever have proposed him, as Carlyle phrased it, for the "presidentship of a heaven and hell amalgamation society." In these days of smooth complacency, when compromise is in the air, and conviction which demands courage and self-sacrifice at a discount, an Auchterlonie is almost as much out of fashion as would be the broad bonnets and plain living of our forefathers. We often hear it said that such an one was before his time; Mr. Auchterlonie was behind his. The Reformation or Covenanting periods would have given him freer scope for his calling and function. He

could not touch truth with the tips of his fingers; he needed to grasp it. Was he to be condemned for that? Is it not a healthy sign, morally, when a man cannot but be moved by wrong, by injustice, by error that leads astray? Surely there are worse things than an outburst of unselfish indignation when there is something in public life to call it forth.

How he upheld the cause of Missions in the face of a too self-pleasing age! He never ceased to remind his generation that devotion to the highest interests of our fellow-creatures was the principal opportunity left to us in modern times, for the manifestation of that spirit of self-sacrifice without which life becomes stale and corrupt. How he rejoiced in the Students' Missionary Movement, and how thankful he would have been to see what a world-wide power it is becoming!

May I be permitted to say, in a parenthetical sentence, how proud he would have been—hater of war as he was—to see our nation rising, as it is doing now, in calm resolution against unbridled ambition and brutal unrighteousness. It truly makes one more hopeful for the future to see our best young life nobly meeting patriotic responsibilities and calls.

Nothing in the traditions and annals of the district in which Auchterlonie lived escaped his notice, if it had in it a touch of the generous and Christ-like. Craigdam and many other Secession centres in the North were places where the Bible and prayer had the opportunity of showing what they could do for a people, and they are, up to their measure, as worthy of a page in the history of the Church of Scotland as the more imposing shrines of Iona and St. Andrews. Many of the stories that Mr. Auchterlonie told of the Craigdam folk show how personal religion and an intimate knowledge of Scripture can quicken the intellect and sharpen the wit.

Here is one:—A young preacher failing to bring out in his sermon the true nature of believing repentance, an old woman in the fellowship said of him: "The cratur disna ken the difference atween legal and evangelical repentance." They were all theologians in Craigdam.*

Mr. Auchterlonie was never tired speaking of the famous McCheyne, and his travels over Buchan as a Church deputy not long before the Disruption and not long before he died. The object of the visitation was to prepare the minds of the people for the great ecclesiastical breach that was coming, and, above all, to bring them face to face with God. He held meetings in various places. In Dr. Andrew Bonar's Memoir of McCheyne, p. 164, we read:—"In Strichen we had a meeting in the Independent Meeting-house. On Friday evening we had two delightful meetings in the Mill at Crichie, and in the Church of Clola," etc. Ellon, an old ecclesiastical centre, reputed to be somewhat hard and reactionary, was much in need of McCheyne. It is said that some of the baser sort of the town came with stones in their pockets (party feeling was high at the time); but as they saw, and listened, they were overcome by the angelic presence of McCheyne. Tradition says they came out, emptied their pockets; returned, and remained till the meeting was finished.

But while McCheyne was gracious, he could be severe. In travelling from one part of Buchan to another in a stage-coach, he happened to mention to a lady he met in it that he was to hold a meeting in the evening at a place not far from her house. She said that she might come to the gathering, and, with an air of condescension, added that if she did so, he would have a bishop's daughter present.

* "Craigdam and its Ministers," by George Walker, 1885, gives some excellent reminiscences of that remarkable community.

McCheyne, lifting his hat, replied:—"Madam, I hope 'Kings' daughters' will be there!"

McCheyne had a wonderful fascination for children. Bonar tells us that the little ones in Palestine ran after him, though they did not know his language. This charm in the man came out in a farmhouse near Craigdam, as Mr. Auchterlonie told me. McCheyne had travelled on foot across Buchan, a distance of twelve miles, to address a meeting. On arriving at the lodging appointed for him, he asked the girl who showed him his room to bring some hot water that he might wash his feet, for he was tired. When she brought it, she looked up into his face and asked if she might be allowed to wash his feet. "Oh yes, my child," he replied, "you may do that." She lived to be an old woman, and to the end of her days she made it her boast that she had washed McCheyne's feet.

XXVII

GEORGE MACDONALD

ON a fine sunny afternoon towards the end of August, about twenty years ago, I called at "the Farm," near Huntly Railway Station, to visit my friend James Macdonald, the distinguished author of the "Place Names of Strathbogie." To my surprise and great gratification I found there his cousin George Macdonald, who had come to spend a few days under the old roof-tree, and, as it turned out, to pay his last visit to his native town.

I was very happy at the unexpected pleasure of sitting beside the man I loved above many, and listening to that voice—almost as broadly Aberdonian in its accent as if he had never left his native county, and yet so strangely captivating in its magnetic thrill and yearning tenderness. It was indeed good to be there, and I was more "lifted up" than if I had met a prince or a duke, and certainly more at home.

I had seen and heard him before in public, lecturing on Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," or other kindred themes; and his novels, so far as inward quickening is concerned, I put before most. But never before had I come out from the general public, and shaken hands with him.

It is sometimes said to be a considerable risk to meet in private a public man whom you admire greatly. Genius, it is said, is seen best at a distance in its own transfiguring

light; as a closer inspection reveals all the infirmities common to the race, and sometimes a few more.

I had no such experience that afternoon. George Macdonald was as genial and accessible as sunshine. He was to me a big bit of human nature, and he did not seem to know its bigness. But you knew it as you looked and listened. A more striking example could not be met of the truth of the saying that genius is usually childlike—that simplicity embosomed in exceptional power is the unmistakable hall-mark of genius.

We were sitting in the front room to the left as you enter the house. As we talked, the afternoon sunshine came peeping in upon us at the window; on seeing which Mr. Macdonald exclaimed with gleeful voice:—"Oh! there's the sun coming in, just as it did when I was a boy."

The place seemed to carry him back to early days, and to open certain doors in the house of memory where those dwelt who had much to do in shaping his life. He spoke much of his grandmother, whom he introduces in his novels. She was a woman of remarkable force and originality of character. It is said she learned to write when she was sixty years of age, and when the Temperance movement was begun in the north she was one of its staunchest adherents. She was a strong Independent, and was truly broad in her sympathies. In proof of that it was said she prayed for the Pope occasionally, petitioning, among other things, that he might get a good wife!

The grandson on that afternoon related to me the following incident not given in any of his books. Like many persons of a bold initiative, she had a temper that sometimes gave trouble. She had reached a considerable age, and one day she spoke rather "unadvisedly" about

being kept so long in this world, where she was of no use. "You are kept here," said one of the household, "till you make it up with the minister."

She had a disagreement with Mr. Hill, minister then of the Independent Church in Huntly, and there was room for more cordiality in their relations. The good man was sent for immediately, and he was only too glad to come. The two were closeted for more than an hour, and both came out with lightened countenances. She was released soon after, and died in peace.

Talk went on and the afternoon passed too quickly away, but not so the impressions which it left behind. Ever since, I have been able to read George Macdonald's works more in the light of his personality. Not that any lofty deliverance came from his lips that afternoon. He was the last man in the world to put on airs and "talk shop." He was carried along like the rest of us by the circumstance and mood of the moment. But somehow the man came out and stood forth, and what had hitherto been more or less a shadowy figure became a living personality. The spirit of the man reaches my spirit all the more tellingly now that I have seen him in the flesh, and seen his smile, and heard his voice.

The two questions are sometimes put together—Is George Macdonald likely to live as a classic? Are his works read to-day? Yes, they are, we can confidently say, by select souls who find a spiritual nutriment in them with a flavour which they can get nowhere else. But his works must have also a considerable general circulation, judging from the sale of the cheap editions of his more popular books. Of course, minds which find suitable aliment in Agnostic and "sex" novels cannot be expected to diet on

what George Macdonald purveys. But this age and its crudities are not to last for ever. The morally oblique, thank God, eventually passes, and the pure and the noble come to their own again.

But can it be said that George Macdonald has established himself as a Scottish classic in the eyes of those most competent to judge? There may be difference of opinion about the latter qualification. Critics who look askance at his religious fervour, and do not suppose it to be fitting in a "Work of Art," are out of court in dealing with a man who glories in the use of art for its highest ends. Are canons of art sufficiently broad-based when in any representation of human life they slight or exclude that which is deepest, most lasting, and of greatest commanding influence? Matthew Arnold commends Emerson to those who desire to live in the *spirit*. George Macdonald stands upon the same ground, but only upon a higher part of it—the definitely Christian.

But apart from this high claim which is advanced for him, there are peculiar excellencies in his writings which are not outshone by many (if any) Scottish writers.

Certainly he deserves a very high place as our representative man, in the field of popular literature, in this part of the land. Who has described Aberdeenshire life and character with such realistic vividness, unless it be William Alexander? Macdonald was a native of the county, a student of our university, and he came under the power of the revived religious life of the land associated with the Haldanes or "Missionars." The Celtic blood, too, coursing in his veins gave him the vision and the feeling to describe a straggling fir-wood, opening up the soul and genius of the scene as not many purely Aberdeenshire men could. What grown-up man ever entered into the comradeships, the frolics, the

tragic struggles and aspirations of youth with more power than the author of "Alec Forbes"?

But there is no doubt that George Macdonald's supreme excellency is that of the poet or novelist-preacher. Coleridge once asked Charles Lamb if he had ever heard him preach. "I never heard you do anything else," was the reply, stuttered out. Still more could that be said of George Macdonald; and the vocation of the preacher can never be gone so long as God and man exist and the one is seeking the other.

Macdonald's diatribes against Calvinism, which to some readers were the fly in the pot of ointment, will now be passed over as having little more than a historical interest. What he says of the Love of God and the beauty of the character of Christ has not lost its freshness and power, though Calvinism and Arminianism are to many the mere technical terms of a forgotten theology.

It is interesting to notice, by the way, how Macdonald, like Erskine of Linlathen, brought his artillery to bear upon Calvinism; and yet both men honoured the strength and loftiness of character to be seen in some of the men it produced, Macdonald in his Thomas Cran the stone-mason, and Erskine in his confession—as brought out by Principal Shairp—that "the most deeply devout men he had known had been brought up as Calvinists."

What a strange, transfiguring, divine-like thing is true and pure genius! It is creative: it can call into existence what the eye cannot see nor the ear hear, making the past present and the old new, all which is as real to our thought and feeling as the things lying about us and on which we step.

I have known Huntly for fifty years, and every time I pay it a visit not only do I see the generation now in possession; but,

through the ministrations of George Macdonald's charming rod, I behold an older race, strong in intellect and conviction, with all their tragedies, foibles, and frolics; and "Annie," "Alec," "Thomas Cran," and "Bruce" the grocer, come nearer to me than the people I pass in the streets.

Does Huntly realise the glory George Macdonald sheds upon it? There is enchantment in his pen. Its hills and streams and fir-trees are suffused with the golden glow of imagination, of which they cannot be robbed by darkest night or dreariest winter.

XXVIII

PROFESSOR BAIN OF ABERDEEN

THE ex-Professor of Logic in King's College was helpful to me when I had the biography of Dr. Kidd on hand. He was, in youth, a hearer and ardent admirer of that great Irishman—"The Prime Minister" of Aberdeen, as an old woman called him.

When I was attempting to recount the career of a man who died before I was born, Dr. Bain was of special service to me by the astonishing retentiveness, vividness, and accuracy of his memory. I do not think I ever met a man who had such perfect possession and easy command of the mental resources which memory carried; whatever his eye and ear had fastened themselves upon remained with him as if engraven upon his nature, bound up in his personality, and producable at any moment.

By his kind hospitality I was invited, when engaged on the biography, to spend an evening in his house; and the three hours I was in his company were memorable, not only in serving my immediate object, but in revealing to me the natural cast and bent of his mind, and giving me so far a clue to the character of the psychology with which his

name is associated, and by which his renown was won. The man and the hour had met in it, and the one was suited to the other. Material science had come very much to the front in this country when he was reaching his meridian as a man of wide knowledge and systematic thought. His natural temperament, inherent mental aptitudes, and varied attainments, made him a fitting vehicle for the philosophy which his generation, to a large extent, favoured.

Whatever came within the range of things seen and temporal was his kingdom; and such was his prodigious memory and power of analysis in the sphere he chose, that few could compete with his right to hold the sceptre there. He was lord of all he surveyed in the domain of physiological states and processes, to the exclusion of "innate ideas," metaphysics, supernatural revelation, faith.

He was not disrespectful to the light others claimed to have, which was never seen on sea or land; only he did not profess to have any personal knowledge of it, and he let it alone. Bain confessed that Wordsworth did not attract him, and I suspect that was very much his relation to Revelation; from the tendency and habit of his mind he found reality only in that which could authenticate itself to the senses and the dry light of the understanding.

But behind it all I had the impression gathered from my conversation with him, reticent on such matters as he was, that he had a deep respect for the religious things he met in his early days; and his contribution to my biography of Dr. Kidd lends itself to that assumption.

Apparently he brought his clear and strong vision, such as it was, to bear upon the facts and forces which an analysis of his own nature and Nature around him laid bare, and with a masterly hand he could bring them into relation with one

another; but anything that transcended this orderly procession of phenomena was to him a strange, alien thing.

It is said that the Scotchman is naturally a sceptic, till religion kindles his affections as well as appeals to his intelligence; and Dr. Bain was emphatically of the Scottish race, for he was an Aberdonian, and had all the characteristics of that type of humanity. Sir William Geddes, who was himself a distinguished native of the county, and principal of its University, once delivered a lecture to our Grammar School boys in which he said that the men of Aberdeenshire rose to distinction in almost all departments of activity. They had more than an average number of men who excelled as scholars, merchants, lawyers, scientists, politicians, physicians, Indian civilians, soldiers, governors; but there were two spheres in which they were decidedly not pre-eminent—oratory and poetry. Strong where the understanding could grasp its objects, the Aberdonian was not so much at home in the higher region which makes room for the spiritual side of man's nature.

Such was Dr. Bain, and, like most philosophers, his fame is not what it once was. There are few things more transient than our schemes of philosophy. Dugald Stewart admits that we have been chasing philosophy for thousands of years, and it has always eluded us. Bain's theory of thought and life is no exception. It is a valuable contribution to the discussion of one of the greatest subjects which can engage the energies of man, given with candour and without bitterness.

I had an interesting opportunity, some years ago, of testing what was once the widespread influence of Bain's writings. I was on my way to Palestine, seated in a train that had started from Paris for Marseilles. We had not

proceeded far on our journey when a lady sitting next me held up a book she was reading, and, in excellent English, asked me if I knew it. It was Bain on "The Emotions and the Will," translated into French.

I told her I knew the author of the book, who lived in the town I came from in Scotland. This made her anxious that I should give my estimate of the book. I evaded her request; but I said—"Allow me to avail myself of the privilege of a Scotchman in answering your question by putting another: —"What induced you, madam, may I ask, to bring such a book as that to read in a train, on a night journey too?"

Then came the pathetic story that she had lost her faith and had left her Church, that she was unsettled religiously, and very unhappy. Her physician in Paris, dealing with her case, had felt the need of giving her something to satisfy the intellect; for she was evidently a rare woman—not only accomplished—and with a mind that could not be put off with make-shifts or mere appeals to authority or sentiment.

I felt I was in a "tight place." She knew I was a minister of religion, and she threw herself upon me for sympathy and direction. Young, with a future opening up to her, she had much to make life desirable. She had her child with her, and was going to spend a holiday with her parents in Marseilles, and her husband had come down to the station to see them off. Yet she was miserable; and her highly strung nature would give her no rest till she had found the truth as a rock to stand upon, and life had divulged to her its secret.

At last I said:—"You have been advised by your physician to read this book. I am not to come between you and him; but I give you this advice:—every time you read a chapter of Bain to find rest to your soul, at the same

time study a page or two of your own Pascal's "Thoughts on Religion."

Pascal! She had never heard of that ornament and glory of French literature and religion, that master of thought to thinkers who are followers of Jesus Christ, whatever be their nationality. Pascal is not a grateful personality to many in the Romish Church, as he sets the Bible before the hierarchy, and he did no service to the Jesuits by his "Provincial Letters"; and so this evidently well-informed French lady had never heard of him.

At last I was driven from an outwork to the citadel of our faith in dealing with this difficult case. "Have you a copy of the New Testament at home?" I asked. She said she had, but I could see that it was not much read.

"Well," I said, "this is my advice, and I give it with great confidence. Read the New Testament, especially the Gospel of John; read it reverently and prayerfully, and you will come into close contact with a great sublime Personality, such as you never met before, before whom you will be constrained to bow, and whom you cannot help loving; and He will show you the rest of the way!"

XXIX

A WALK FROM KEMNAY TO KINTORE

CAN I ever forget that walk on a sweet summer day from Kemnay to Kintore? It was along the old Muir road, and my companion was the late laird of Kemnay, Alexander G. Burnett.

I had been his guest for a few days; and, with the exuberant courtesy of the old time, he volunteered to accompany me part of the way, that we might prolong our conversation upon a variety of topics which were not hedged in by any restriction other than that of the knowledge and affinities of the speakers.

Mr. Burnett's talk, as all who knew him were well aware, was governed more by association and suggestion than by inexorable logic, more by the immediate occasion and the mood of the moment than by an obvious and necessary sequence of thought. One thing led up to another like the links of an invisible chain, as a capacious and well-furnished mind had them at hand.

While this idiosyncrasy had its drawbacks in the printed page, it often gave piquancy to the talk. The dullness which comes from dwelling too long upon one aspect of

things was never experienced in Mr. Burnett's company. The discourse might be discursive, but it was always redeemed by its evident spontaneity — like a mountain stream which holds on its course, though it often changes its level, as it leaps from crag to crag.

When we were a considerable distance beyond the policies of Kemnay House, we reached a high-lying and comparatively unfrequented part of the road (the old foot-road, remember), that was very rough and soft. It had more than its usual muddiness on account of heavy rains which had fallen during the previous night. All things considered, I thought my aged friend (he was 86 at the time) had more than enough of it. I gently reminded him that I was trespassing upon his kindness in allowing him to accompany me so far. "Oh," he replied, "I have not gone very far: let us not part company yet."

So on we plunged, and were soon so much immersed in an endless succession of subjects which came up in kaleidoscopic fashion, as to be wonderfully oblivious of miry ruts and "dubs," to the no small detriment of boots and trousers. The resumption of the journey seemed to rejuvenate my companion. He began to recall the experiences of his early days, and those in particular which shed light upon the ways and manners of that time caught my memory. He told me of his grandmother, who lived in Old Aberdeen, and who, when he was a boy, took him one Sabbath day into the vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel after the morning service was over. She had gone there to invite the clergyman of the place, the well-known and much respected Rev. John Brown, to breakfast in her house next morning. He was there in good time, and his home was in Culter, eight or nine miles distant!

The man of all others upon whom Mr. Burnett frequently and lovingly expatiated was Christopher Anderson, minister of Charlotte Chapel, Rose Street, Edinburgh. He was the presiding genius and—if such an expression can be used in connection with Mr. Burnett—the "patron saint" of his early life. It was the great privilege of our friend, while attending the University of Edinburgh, to have this able and good man as his minister—a person of striking force of character, keen incisive intellect, and extensive erudition—as was abundantly shown in the books he wrote, especially his "Annals of the English Bible."

Coming under the influence of this strong fervid personality at the plastic period of life, an impression was made upon the mind of the ingenuous youth which remained with him, fresh and vivid, when he was an old man.

"Brown of Inverurie" was another name that came up frequently, and was repeated with as much reverence as any one living in the Middle Ages could have spoken of Bernard of Cluny or Francis of Assisi; and it was as much deserved. The self-denying devotion of that Independent minister of Inverurie, in caring for the spiritual interests of his fellow-creatures all over this district, could not have been exceeded by any saint or hero of the Middle Ages.

In preaching all over the country, instituting Sabbath schools, establishing libraries, and in general visitation, he earned the gratitude and affection of the people; and when he needed rest he was an honoured guest in Kemnay House. Our Mr. Burnett, who was then a boy, delighted to tell of the honour shown by the whole countryside to Mr. Brown at his funeral. Crowds thronged the roads near the graveyard, and in passing the tolls between

Aberdeen (where he died) and Inverurie no dues were exacted.*

Thus the goodly stream of reminiscence and reflection flowed on in undiminished volume, as if it were never to come to an end; and there was indeed no reason why it should, so far as amplitude of resource was concerned. But we were now much more than half-way to Kintore. He had been exerting himself from the moment we started, for in conversation, as at table, I was to a large extent the guest, and he the hospitable provider. I was uneasy. I felt I could not upon my conscience encourage him to come farther on my account, as I knew there was no train back to Kemnay for several hours. I ventured with some hesitation to express my feeling; whereupon he turned round, looked me straight in the face, and rather sharply asked—"Sir, are you tired of my company?"

No more could be said after that. It was wisdom to bow to the limits of things. I might have been less anxious had I only remembered, what I very well knew, that he was a practised pedestrian. In his prime, thirty or forty miles was not too much for a day's march. Even when he was verging upon 90 he had his walk every day. He had strong heart and lungs, and a lithe frame; and, not having a heavy burden to carry, walking was to him a most delightful recreation. I have seen him come out of his carriage when the ascent was so gentle that the horses did not really need to have their load lightened; but it seemed to be a pleasure

*Character, like water, finds its own level eventually, if you only give it time to work its way upon the moral sense and popular imagination. Think of the many northern parishes and market places which still bear the names of obscure Celtic missionaries, who, in their day, so earned the reverence and gratitude of the people, that their chapels and shrines became the chief things in this part of the country.

to him to be out and upon his feet, and then he would walk at a brisker pace than persons not half his age.

So on we went, like Christian and Faithful, and like them of the Pilgrim story we now and again discoursed upon the grandeur and power of the Gospel as revealing a love and condescension so marvellous as to transcend all the wonders and glories of nature. His piety was sincere and childlike. He certainly could give a reason for the hope that was in him; but his was intelligence without guile. He had a knowledge and command of Scripture which few possess. No wonder: it was the constant study of a long life, and that life was bound up in it. His position as a landed gentleman did not blind him as to where the reality, the permanency, and glory of life were to be found. On that country road I heard him *exult* in God as he reviewed the past and thought of the marvellous forbearance and loving kindness which had been shown to him. As he lived so he died. Time made him an old man, but not one of life's satiated tired-out guests, only a "weaned child."

But Mr. Burnett did not forget that life was a many-sided thing. Earth was his as well as Heaven, as was shown by his allusions to things as we passed along. His many interests, and the ideas of his own on many subjects which came out in his numerous newspaper letters, slipped in now and again to our talk. He had most of the tastes of a country gentleman, except shooting—which he did not regard as much above the exercise of an ordinary "butcher!" He found much occupation and enjoyment in his grounds. Every day he examined his thermometer outside, and at noon compared his watch with the dial. It was his great joy to go out to the garden before breakfast;

but in latter days it was pathetic to hear him say that while he *saw* the birds he did not *hear* them.

He was a keen observer of the weather, and few things gave him more pleasure than to have the opportunity of correcting misstatements regarding the condition of things as we have them in Scotland. He prided himself on being a Scot, and having a country to live in that had its own distinctive aspects.

More than once he kept me right as to the times and the seasons. Many years ago I was preaching in the Inverurie Independent Church, and he was one of the congregation. It was toward the end of February, and the day was superb. In the course of prayer I thanked God for the calm and sunshine and promise of this spring day. Mr. Burnett reminded me, after the service was over, that we were not yet out of winter, and this was no more than what country folk call a "weather-gaw." The calendar he drew up for the north of Scotland, it must be owned, kept nearer to the facts than almanacks for general use did.

In one of the not very frequent pauses in the conversation, we discovered, on consulting our watches, that we had left ourselves rather little time for what remained of my journey—which Mr. Burnett had made his. After a spurt, I succeeded in catching my train. My friend never thought of waiting for his, and of the two he was by far the least concerned about the five miles which lay between him and his home!

That walk I have described was to me an outstanding experience. I had many opportunities before and subsequent to that memorable day of testing the quality of Mr. Burnett's spirit, and of tapping the resources of a marvellous memory

which kept guard over the varied accumulations of a long life that was life to the end. But that walk seemed to bring things to a focus. I had, in the course of it, an abstract and epitome of the things in life most precious to him. It is not every day that you meet with an ingenuous soul, wholly surrendered to the love of the truth, and who is at leisure to tell the vision he has seen.

I owe much to Mr. Burnett. He was a living exponent of far-away and profoundly interesting times, of special value to me who had made Scottish history and biography of a hundred years ago the occasional pursuit of the greater part of a life-time. I never met one whose impressions of the distant past were so readily reproduced, and with such distinctness, vividness, and photographic accuracy. He could mirror in his talk the period of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and tell what we do not find in books regarding their appearance and mannerisms. Dr. Chalmers, at whose feet he sat in the class-room ; Robert and James Haldane, the "Missionars"; John Foster and Robert Hall; his kinsman the saintly sage of Linlathen ; Spurgeon in his early days—all came before me with touches of personal colouring. The pale figures of history, at his call, came out of their shadowy precincts and were felt to be men of the same flesh and blood as ourselves, vitalised by the fervour of interest he himself took in them, as was evidenced by his lit-up countenance and his sonorous voice, always at its best when the deeper chords were struck—as in reading the Psalms at family worship.

XXX

THE EARL OF ERROLL

MY sole link of connection with the late Earl of Erroll, of Slains Castle, was a common interest I had with him in the formation and progress of the Congregational Church in the village of Port Erroll, on his estate. The following sentences from a book recently published, "Cruden and its Ministers," and written by the minister of the parish, explains how I was led to interest myself specially in that part of the world :—

"The Congregational Church of Cruden has a history quite apart from the other churches. It was due to no secession, but was the outcome of a natural wish on the part of the people of Port Erroll to have a church beside their own homes. For a time this wish was partly met by services held in the Mission Hall—the "Ward Meeting House" as it was called—which was erected by public subscription in the early seventies, and which was open to the use of "all evangelical ministers." But in December, 1882, a public meeting was held at which it was resolved to found a separate church, and to make it Congregational in its form of government. This was the desire of the late Lord Erroll, who took an active interest in the movement—he proved indeed a most generous patron of the new church, and a regular worshipper within its walls—and it also met with most favour from the people who were present. The Rev. James Stark of Aberdeen (now Dr. Stark), and the Rev. J. Gray of Peterhead, were approached for counsel and guidance, and in a short time the congregation found themselves in a position to invite a young student, just finishing his course, to become their minister." ("Cruden and its Ministers," by Rev. Adam Mackay, B.D., p. 135).

We had the hearty sympathy and thorough-going co-operation of both the Earl and the Countess in the many things which had to be done in giving effect to the resolution come to by the majority of the people of the place. There was no attempt to ignore or coerce any who desired to bind themselves together in Church fellowship. Indeed I was struck with the consideration and deference shown by those in high place. I never saw a finer example of the possibility of Christian experience over-shadowing social distinctions, and making one inwardly of diverse elements as they appeared to the world.

The Countess, by her gracious tact and truly Christian sympathy, did a great deal to establish and help forward the enterprise, though she retained her connection with the Parish Church, distant a mile or two—the old minister, the much respected Mr. Ross, being a personal friend. But the Earl identified himself heart and soul with the movement, and spoke of the new fellowship as "our" Church.

The Rev. George Saunders of Woodside and I, who went out as deputies appointed by the denomination at the request of local friends formally to constitute the church, did not experience much difficulty, as the persons who offered themselves for membership were for the most part accredited Christians, and not a few of them had come under the direct influence of the great Revival of 1859-60, which did so much for our north-east coast villages.

The Church having been formally constituted, due effect was given to that act by the observance of the Lord's Supper on the following Sabbath. The people felt it was a most solemn occasion, and it was the spiritual reality of the whole proceeding which made it so. It was a real transaction, as much as any in apostolic times, and not a mere ceremonial.

All was so simple. When hearts go out to each other there is usually simplicity of utterance. There is so much glory in true love that it needs nothing else than its own avowed presence to set it forth. All over and above that is impertinence and distraction, as much as a gorgeous lantern is to the noonday sun. The Word was seen to be flesh first of all in a manger. The whole Incarnation is a repudiation of earth's pretensions as heaven stands forth.

So it was with us. Here we were assembled in the "Ward Meeting House"—a few neighbours who had come to acknowledge themselves as fellow-believers, and unitedly to surrender themselves to the Lord Christ who had redeemed them by the shedding of His precious blood. The bread and the wine were spread upon a little fir-table. On my right hand, as I presided, was a fisherman ; on my left, a stone-mason (brother of the evangelist—Turner—who did so much in the coast villages in 1860). Before me, seated beside Mr. Saunders, was the Earl of Erroll, Hereditary Lord High Constable of Scotland, with his daughter Lady Florence. All around were the people of the village and district who composed the newly-formed fellowship, mostly fishermen, and some of them the very excellent of the earth.

It was a truly unique and suggestive scene, and one that only the Christian Church could present. By no other institution upon the earth could the brotherhood of men be so affirmed, and the Lord's Table was the nucleus of it all. It has been well said that the only thing our Lord personally *instituted* was the Lord's Supper. But how much does that simple spiritual rite embrace ! In symbol it takes in the whole. Nothing that is essential to our faith is left out. Let the Lord's Supper be intelligently and sincerely

observed, and you have the Gospel at the table though it may, unhappily, not be in the pulpit. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do *show*"—announce, proclaim, preach—"the Lord's death till He come."

The feeling between the castle and the village was beautiful to behold. Almost every day the Earl or Countess was down in the village visiting the sick or aged. "Duthie," the character and oracle of the place, was asked by one of the Erroll family after the death of the Earl and the departure of the Countess, if he had seen any great changes in his day. "Yes," he replied, "and the greatest of them is that the grass is growing upon the path (private) between the castle and the village!"

By the work to which I was called in Port Erroll I was introduced to the magnificent coast scenery of that part of Buchan. Dunbuy, the Bullers, the cliffs of Whinnyfold are all linked with the memories I am now recalling, and with the sea washing upon them—as imagination depicts them—make a grand background to the picture which can never fade from my mind.

Perhaps there is not anything among them all more striking than Slains Castle itself, fronting the ocean and built upon the edge of the rocky precipices which keep guard upon one side of the North Sea as Norway does upon the other. The famous Sir John Sinclair once observed that no English nobleman, however extensive his "Park," had such a royal space in front of his mansion as he had in the far north, Thurso Castle being built upon the sea. Slains is not behind it.

My heart as well as my conscience will not allow me to turn from Port Erroll without laying a stone upon the cairn

of J. D. Hardie, M.A., the first minister of that Church. He was a faithful and lovable soul, and I have tender recollections of him.

The sword was keen, too keen for the sheath. His pastorate did not extend over eight years, and during that time a goodly congregation was gathered, and a place of worship erected capable of holding four hundred people—which was opened free of debt; a manse also was provided, of which his tenure was brief, as ill health enforced his resignation.

He was worn out, and he could no longer face the responsibilities of the ministry. He went back to his old business as a druggist, and opened a shop in Bucksburn, near Aberdeen, which was wonderfully prosperous. Wherever he went people believed in him. But he never thoroughly recovered his health. It was a struggle, and a noble one; but it could only come to an end in one way.

On the day of his death a letter came from him to me, which had been written some time before with the instruction that it was to be given to me after he was gone. On opening it I found, among other things, it expressed mainly the desire that as I knew him and had been associated with him in his work, perhaps I would, on the Sabbath after his death, tell the part of the world my voice reached that the Gospel which he had preached was still as precious to him as ever; and now that he could no longer hold it forth in this world, he wished with his last breath to magnify its adorable all-sufficiency for death as well as for life. He found that instead of the disappointments and mysteries of life driving him to despair, they drew him nearer to the Crucified One. His mortal remains lie in Cruden parish.

XXXI

GLIMPSES OF GREAT PREACHERS

ROBERT FLINT, D.D., LL.D.

I HEARD Dr. Flint, who became our greatest theologian and philosopher of his generation in Scotland, in Abbotshall Church, Kirkcaldy, when he and I were both young men. An uncle of mine was "at the plate" as I went into the Church, and, pointing to me, said to his fellow-elder:—"That's a nephew of mine who is preparing for the ministry." "In what Church?" was the enquiry. "He is an Independent," my kinsman said, which brought forth the rejoinder:—"Stupid fellow: they'll starve him: he should join us!"

I did join them that afternoon in appreciation of a strong, simple, noble Scot, whose greatness in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen grew with the years. What I recall most vividly of his discourse was its strong thinking and unaffected fervid eloquence. It was a rushing stream. Mrs. Hanna, daughter of Dr. Chalmers, said that no preacher of recent times reminded her so much of her father as Dr. Flint. He was at that time minister of Kilconquhar, Fifeshire; and there, and in the East Parish, Aberdeen, where he was before, he

laid the foundation of those attainments which afterwards gave him his unique position. We had a Congregational Church at Elie in those days, and Mr. Longwill, its accomplished minister, met Dr. Flint regularly that they might pursue certain studies together.

Flint was a man of rare independence, and his unconventionality was positively shocking to certain minds. His parents lived with him, and, when he was professor of moral philosophy in St. Andrews, his father always had a place of honour at table, and to the day of his death the old man conducted family worship as the head of the house.

Let this sentence of the great thinker remain with us:—"Remember that religion or faith can only be lost or won through the affections."

JOHN CAIRD, D.D.

John Caird introduced himself to the notice of the world by the sermon he preached in Crathie Church before Queen Victoria, in 1857, on "Religion in Common Life"; and he afterwards became Principal of Glasgow University.

I heard him in Glasgow on a special occasion, when he was in his prime and in one of his lofty and unapproachable flights. The text was:—"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil"—a text that lent itself to eloquence on the grand scale. As a cogent argument, a finished piece of art, a consummate pulpit oration, it was perfect—in so far as the effort of a highly accomplished man could make it; in its appeal to the reason, the imagination, the emotions, and literary taste, I never heard anything like it. It was so sustained, so symmetrical; and, as a product of the mind, it was

a splendid unity. I have heard sermons which displayed more original genius from Dr. Norman McLeod and Jones the Welsh "poet-preacher," but never anything so ambitious in form, so finished, and so lofty in its finish.

The whole thing was studied from beginning to end, carefully composed, committed to memory, launched forth with brilliancy of imagination and vehemency of passion; the very delivery having an ordered method in it, each division of the discourse beginning with a calm statement of truth and gradually rising to an overpowering climax.

But while such a pulpit feat was interesting as showing what could be done, and might be very useful as an academic exercise or a striking demonstration of power, it could scarcely be called preaching. The preacher is not one who speaks *before*, but *to* you. You may be thrilled by such a masterpiece as I heard as you would be by a classic drama, and yet nothing may come home to what is deepest in you. Is not the French king's test of the excellency of a preacher one that cannot be surpassed?—which was somewhat as follows:—"When I hear other preachers I think more of them; when I hear you I think less of myself." The preacher is not a lecturer or orator. He has to do with me—the hearer.

Were such a discourse as I heard possible every Sunday, would it be desirable? You could not say of it what Wordsworth said of his wife—"a creature not too bright or good for human nature's daily food." On going to a prayer-meeting what you expect is not an oratorio of Handel. On kneeling at family worship in the house of a friend, one of Milton's grand passages from "Paradise Lost" could not take the place of homely prayer. Everything in its place and season.

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

There can be no doubt that Joseph Parker was emphatically a preacher. He was that by instinct, training, and life-long practice. He had no oration to recite, but he had a message to deliver. My first thought as I saw Dr. Parker enter his pulpit (and I always went to the City Temple when I had a Thursday in London) was—Well, there is a man who is free: he has no encumbrance of prayer-book or manuscript; there is nothing before me but the man, as he thinks and feels and comes under the inspiration and direction of God's Spirit.

But you will be greatly mistaken if you think it was all as off-hand as it appeared to be. There was much pondering and praying before the master of his art could stand there and hold forth as he did. He looked like the magician who goeth and taketh you whithersoever he listeth. He was really the workman that needeth not to be ashamed—plus genius.

Dr. Marshall Lang once told me he spent a Sunday as the guest of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and at night, when giving an account of the preachers he had heard during the day, he said:—"I went to my own Church—Presbyterian, in the morning: I heard Canon Farrar in the afternoon, and Dr. Parker in the evening, and the last was the man that gripped me": *gripped* was the word he used.

CHARLES SPURGEON

In listening to Charles Spurgeon I did not think of the man at all, except to notice at the outset that his appearance was not very prepossessing, and that his silvery bell-like voice

was enough to make the fortune of any public man. But I did feel what he was saying. It is said that of all lights the light of the sun is the least noticeable. Spurgeon, as he opened up the Scriptures, did not stand in the way of *the* light shining upon his hearers. You forgot you were in the "Tabernacle," and felt you were "upon the mount," and it was good to be there.

Spurgeon took you, as few men of his day did, to the core and crown of the Gospel. If he was narrow, the big things of life and revelation were included within his "narrowness." He gave you depth and height.

As a man and a preacher, not as a scholar and theologian, Spurgeon was the Martin Luther of his day. When I think of his preaching, I call up a clear gushing stream of pure water, that was such a blessing to the thirsty. His undefiled and unadorned Saxon was part of the man. Yet he was choice in his expression. I remember being struck with the number of verbal corrections which had taken effect in the printed report of a sermon I had heard on the previous Sabbath. That was needed in perfecting the form of the message as delivered, for it was purely extemporaneous in language.

Spurgeon was hard at work all the week—too hard; but the specific preparation for Sunday was made on Saturday evening, after he had dismissed his friends who met with him for tea and prayer once a week. David McLaren (once of Edinburgh) told me that on leaving the reception on a Saturday evening Spurgeon said:—"To-morrow is Easter Sunday and I have used most of the prominent texts for the day—can you give me one?" One was given from the Acts of the Apostles. Next day my friend heard a powerful sermon on it, in the Tabernacle.

What a lover of good men Spurgeon was! The late Rev. John Dymock of Kemnay Free Church was conducting the service in the Presbyterian Church in Mentone when Spurgeon happened to be present. At the close of the service, he, with delight in his countenance, came up to the preacher who was a man of high and intense spirituality, and, not content with shaking hands, Spurgeon kissed him on both cheeks. Was that not true catholicity sealed?

He quite fell in love with "John Murker," and with his own hand wrote a long review of it in the "Sword and Trowel," which led to a second edition of the book.

HENRY WARD BEECHER

Henry Ward Beecher I never heard in the pulpit, but there was much of the platform in the attitude he took in most of his prelections. He was very much a man of affairs as well as a powerful speaker, and he did notable service in the Anti-slavery Crusade in the United States.

I heard him in Aberdeen when he was making a lecturing tour in this country, not long before he died. Genius is not a word to be lightly used, but there can be no doubt that as a speaker he had it in extraordinary measure. It is said by some critics that the absorbing study of Evolution toward his latter days tended to undermine the strength of the giant as a preacher.*

*His sister, Mrs. H. B. Stowe, to my mind was greater in genius and character. She is not known as she ought to be for some of her minor stories. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" puts them too much in the shade. He that does not read her "Minister's Wooing" is doing himself an injury, and remains ignorant of one of the best pictures of New England Puritan life.

CANON FARRAR

Not long after I came to Aberdeen I met, and spoke from the same platform, with Canon Farrar. It came about in this way. The directors of the Temperance Society in that city, hearing that the Canon had undertaken to address meetings in the south of Scotland on behalf of the cause which they represented, urged him to come farther north and favour them with the like advocacy. This he consented to do, provided they secured another speaker to share the work of the evening. One of the leading Presbyterian ministers of the town was engaged to do so; but within a few days of the meeting sickness came into his family, and he was obliged to cancel the arrangement. I was asked to enter the breach, which I did with fear and trembling; but I found the great Canon Farrar to be a most unassuming and tender-hearted colleague. I may be said then to have heard Farrar the preacher, for his address was an earnest and noble plea for Christian self-restraint in view of the terrible evils of intemperance.

Never before nor since has there been such a Temperance meeting in Aberdeen. It was a grand representative gathering. The city in all its classes, sects, and interests turned out to see and hear Canon Farrar. He was in the height of his fame as a preacher and still more as a writer, fervid and gorgeous in style. His "Life of Christ," translated into almost every European language, made him known all over the world.

The Canon's voice was not marked for carrying power, and he was not well heard in the distant parts of the Music Hall, which, as its name indicates, was primarily intended for

something else than speaking; but what a testimony there was in his presence on such a platform. One is not bound to adhere to all that Canon Farrar says as a theologian, to pay him the tribute due to one of the noblest of his generation. It is not easy to be patient with some men in the liberties they presume to take with a writer who did splendid service, bearing his own imprint, to the highest truth. "Florid" is the term they fling at him. But, as a sensible old beadle said to some sedate and matter-of-fact deacons who were rather sharply criticising W. L. Alexander (Dr.), when a youthful preacher, for his rhetorical flowers,—"What ails you at flooers?"

Westcott and Lightfoot have their place, as they discourse on the nature of our Lord; but while we admire the Ionic and Doric columns in the temple of truth, can we not also give a place to the Corinthian?

THE "BRAES O' BENACHIE"

XXXII

THE "BRAES O' BENACHIE"

THE "Braes o' Benachie" is nestled in a secluded and romantic spot encircled by hills, and near it many waters and parishes meet. It stands alongside the little-frequented Glenton road, up from the Don about 200 yards on the southern side of the Benachie range, and at the north-western extremity of Tilliefoure, and the quoad sacra parish of Blairdaff. It belonged originally to the parish of Oyne, and does so still for civil purposes. Two minutes' walk up the glen takes you into the parish of Keig, and looking right across the river from our abode you see a pine and birch clad slope that is in the parish of Monymusk, a name as fragrant in associations as it is euphonious in sound.

For three or four miles down the river, and for nearly as many up from the "Braes," the Don puts on its very richest apparel, and presents a delightful picturesqueness of scenery which, for sustained and surprising charm, cannot be surpassed in many parts of Scotland.

Mountain, flood, and wood, and all that goes to make a distinctively Scottish picture, are to be seen as you do not expect to see them in this part of Aberdeenshire. From Monymusk to Keig Bridge, the Don is not at all the plain prosaic stream it is generally supposed to be. Compared

with its aristocratic neighbour, the Dee, the Don is usually regarded as useful, but plebeian ; good enough for propelling mills, and watering fields where cattle are fed, but lacking in those finer features which a Highland stream exhibits. The "Dee for fish and tree": the "Don for horn and corn."

But, just as a very ordinary person may have his occasional transfiguring experiences, through some unexpected outburst of latent power when the occasion calls it forth ; so the Don, in flowing through this region, assumes an aspect which is always engaging, and not without some occasional touches of grandeur.

Between the "Braes" and the towering mountain wall of Benachie, which in our fond imagination has almost a semi-Alpine aspect, there are several burns, one of which is the northern boundary of our garden ground. The description given to Canaan, in the book of Deuteronomy, as "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills" applies to this neighbourhood so closely, that we might be almost justified in appropriating the descriptive terms, provided it be always explained that they were in the first instance intended for the Land of Promise!

Wherever you go you see the sparkle and hear the murmur of the waters wending their way to the Don. On the quiet moorland or the heathery height, when you deem yourself to be absolutely alone, you are gently reminded that there is a creature-presence near you, other than the startled grouse or partridge, in the trickling rill at your feet.

The Don at night, by its constant refrain, breaks the silence of the glen, and yet completes it—"He feels the silence in the sound"—and brings a touch of mystery as well as a subdued strain of music into the spacious solitude.

It is night which calls out the higher resources of this bit of earth. It then becomes a possession to the imagination and spirit. You must live in the country by night, if you would know what it can bring to you.

It is difficult to say in what season and under which of its changing aspects this upland part appears to most advantage. The latest is the freshest of Nature's pageants, and is consequently the most prevailing in its claim to appreciation.

Spring here, where there is so much of the earth unsubdued by the hand of man, is remarkable for its rich profusion of wild flowers. The celandine, primrose, daffodil, and wild-rose are familiar friends, who judiciously arrange not to come all at once. The wood-anemones appear in myriads, which astonish as much as they feast the eye. I never saw such expanses of wild flowers anywhere save on the plains of Galilee. How bravely the whin and the broom, and in such force, hold up their banner and spread their fragrance! Perhaps the most distinctive feature in the marvellous wealth of spring blossom is the glory of the gean, the rowan, and above all the bird-cherry.

Autumn brings its own show, which cannot be compared with anything else, but must just be taken for what it is.

The autumnal colouring here, indeed, baffles the power of man by his arts to rival. The spreading purple heather, later on the rich scarlet of the rowan berries, the crimson of the gean, and the background of browns and yellows on the hill-sides, show that, while Nature is succumbing to the chilling touch of approaching winter, she is doing so in a way to prove that she has kept some hidden splendour in reserve.

Principal Shairp of St. Andrews, who was as much a child of Nature as he was a son of the schools, said that

one of the sweetest experiences of his life was to be alone by the side of a Scottish burn: and if he could have been transported to the *Birks Burn* when the birch—the "lady of the wood"—was putting on her autumn dress, and the rowan displaying all its glory, he would have been confirmed in his appreciation.

Perhaps the most suggestive and exalting scene which this region can present is when a saunter is taken along the bank of the Don, from the end of the "path of peace," on a Sabbath evening, after we have "met on the way" those of the glen who have joined us in the worship of God.

It is nightfall in summer, and all over except in one direction—it looks as if things were coming to an end. The sun has gone down behind the hill: the vapours are gathering upon the neighbouring heights: the flowers at our feet have folded themselves in their leaves: the birds have gone to their nests: the day is done: there is to be a pause: Nature's operations are to be arrested.

Nay, not altogether! Look at the Don and listen: do you not hear its ripple as it flows on, a living thing, obeying the call of the great ocean? The river is not less copious and persistent because of the settling darkness. There is something before you escaping from the enveloping gloom. It is the on-going stream!

What a parable! Is not the interpretation thereof an aid to faith? The body sinks when the night of death comes; but the higher life goes on. Even death is "yours." Does not the old proverb put it well—"Hae God, hae a'?"

XXXIII

W. M. MACPHERSON, D.D., MONYMUSK

DR. MACPHERSON, of Monymusk, whom it was good to know, was of such a retiring disposition, and was so much a keeper at home, that few outside his parish and Presbytery were aware what a man of rare worth lived and laboured in this secluded part for upwards of forty years. His name reached the reading public twenty years ago through his book on Monymusk and its Priory, which he, with characteristic modesty, entitled—"Materials for a History of the Church and Priory of Monymusk," but which experts declared to be, for its elaboration of detail and painstaking accuracy, a model parish history.

His more recent publication—"The Path of Life: Thoughts on Personal Salvation"—was more after his own heart and in the line of his life-long thought and business. It is really a transcript of his own experience and spirit, an epitome of the essential elements of his preaching suited to beginners in the divine life. It is not a "popular" book, and doubtless would have been more acceptable fifty or a hundred years ago than it is likely to be in this age of haste and superficiality.

Yet you might read both the books mentioned which came from his pen without coming to anything like a full knowledge of the man. His exquisite purity of character,

gracious dignity, intense warmth of heart, scrupulous honour, and habitual elevation of spirit were fully known only to those who had a place in the inner circle of his friendship. There was a certain distinction about him which it was difficult to define, but of one thing you were sure—it was not of the earth earthy. What Nathaniel Hawthorne said of himself was true of our friend—he was constitutionally unfitted for going out readily to others (unless he saw that he could be of service to them), and he was powerless to show the way into himself. But, once in, it was not long before you felt that you were keeping company with one who was not of the common mould. Some of the place-names of this part of Donside mark spots hallowed by the lives and labours of heralds of the Cross sent forth by Columba or his successors, and Dr. Macpherson was of the same godly succession. He was so far removed from the din and stir of this noisy and restless age, and so full of the truth that is timeless, that if I had believed in the transmigration of souls (it sometimes entered my mind as I looked up to him in the pulpit of that church so suggestive of the past), I could almost imagine that one of the best of of the Culdee priors had come to life again with a message for the present day as much needed as it was a thousand years ago.

Dr. Macpharson was not so much a preacher, in any professional sense, as a man of God who preached and could not keep from doing so. Here was the Word before him in which he delighted, and from which he personally had derived the deepest satisfaction of his life, and there were the people waiting to be fed. He must preach : and with emphasis and urgency. Quiet and unobtrusive in private, he was aflame in the pulpit, as he realised his responsibility and embraced his opportunity. Therefore there was no

uncertain sound and no lack of authority ; but with it all a pleading tone—almost tearful sometimes, a gentle persuasiveness, a winsomeness—all revealing tenderness of heart as well as strength of conviction, and the deep irrepressible desire to be of service in the name of Jesus Christ to those before him.

He ever felt that his business in the pulpit was to open up the Scriptures ; the cast of his mind and his veneration for the Word made him an expositor. He was a scholar as painstaking and exact as he was devout (it was the habit of a lifetime to spend the early hours of the morning in reading his Greek Testament), rather than the philosophical theologian who, by the grasp of general truths, tried to construct a system. He took the truth piecemeal as he found it in the original text.

He was thoroughly conversant with the theological and critical literature of the day, and was not unaware of the controversies affecting the origin and structure of the various parts of Scripture ; but his mind had no leaning in the direction of that type of scholar who is at home amidst the dust of disputation, and delights to dwell in the outer court of the Sanctuary. He had an eye and a heart for the essential and immediately practical things in Revelation which availed on the day of Pentecost, and which avail to-day. He felt that the "things most surely believed among us," the great Catholic verities of our faith which had brought light and healing to successive generations, afforded standing ground sure enough and scope roomy enough for any preacher of righteousness and salvation. Like Apollos, he was "fervent in the spirit," and he had a passion for affirmation which could be verified apart from his own reasoning—for what was certain, positive, vital,

experimental, and as given in the name and upon the authority of God. His loving, confiding nature could not bear suspense or doubt in matters where the loss or gain of eternal salvation was involved.

Jesus Christ was the keystone of his faith, his sufficiency as a man and as a preacher, his all in all. The very last sermon he preached was on the three voices from heaven attesting the pleasure which the Father had in the Son. The historical Christ certified and commended by the simple presentation of His personality in the Gospels—just as the sun in the heavens is its own demonstration—was the foundation of his certitude and the impelling motive in all his labours. Like Samuel Rutherford, he could not speak of Jesus Christ in formal and measured terms. As he contemplated and mused, the fire burned. As he tried to tell the vision he had seen the spirit of the man was exalted and his heart made glad, both face and voice bearing testimony to the fact. His ardent and reverent soul rose in rapture to Him who was fairer than the children of men, and he was all the more carried away by his feeling that his habitual mood was that of the still and reserved man who unduly repressed himself.

The prevailing type of Scottish preaching, at least in the past, was solid, doctrinal, didactic, appealing largely to the understanding—and it has given a good account of itself in its effects upon the character of the nation; but in Dr. Macpherson's discourses there was much glowing expansion founded upon scriptural narrative or precept, and, while logical sequence of thought was there, it was not obvious, and certainly not obtrusive. Had he been alive more than two hundred years ago, critics would have said that, as a preacher, he belonged to the school of Archbishop

Leighton, who brought little controversy into the pulpit, but much spirituality and unction. His sermons seldom had divisions, and were sometimes lacking in practical points which people could easily grasp and remember; but, if nothing else was carried away, the impression made upon every devout worshipper and attentive hearer was that he had been "upon the Mount" and the *sough* of heaven had come to his soul. In listening to him, the homily of a devout, scholarly English Churchman was suggested to the mind, and, while the prayers had a rare freedom and richness, there was now and again a liturgical ring in them which would have made the service thoroughly congenial to any true-hearted son of the Church of ancient or modern times. A Bernard and an à Kempis as well as Luther and Knox would have been drawn in kinship of spirit to the preacher, he was so central, vital, and evangelical.

XXXIV

FELLOW-VOYAGERS

IT is said, if you want to know a man—travel with him; and if you have a preference in the mode of locomotion, choose to sail in a ship with him. Cribbed, cabined, and confined, what's in your companion and in yourself is sure to be squeezed out. He and you are obliged to be yourselves, as there is no room for anything else. You are so thrown upon each other's society, that you cannot fail to discover much that would probably have remained hidden upon the wider environment of the land.

I had a remarkable example of this on coming down the Baltic from Petersburg. Among the very few English-speaking passengers on board was an Episcopalian clergyman from London. We might have been long in our own country without meeting, much less conversing. But here we were, and what else could we do than be civil to each other? After various attempts of a tentative nature to find something in common as a topic of conversation, I suggested that, as we had nothing else to do, we might try our hand at a scheme of Christian Union—the church of the future.

"As I am an older man than you," I said, "I begin

with this as my contribution to the discussion :—Every man who is a *Christian* is to have a place in my church of the future, *i.e.*, every man who trusts in Jesus Christ as a Saviour and bows to Him as a Sovereign."

"I cannot go so far as that," said my companion ; "to begin with, I hold that there is no properly constituted church, unless its members receive the grace of doctrine and sacrament through a properly ordained medium. I hold by the dogma of Apostolic succession."

"Have you good ground," I asked, "for such positive assurance of the unbroken historic continuity and so-called validity of ministerial orders? Did not some of your own bishops, for generations after the Reformation, take the same free and liberal position regarding ordination that our own John Knox and other Reformers did? And in recent times how many honoured men of your church stand where they did, including Archbishop Whately, who maintained there were many missing links in the so-called succession of ministerial grace."

"Whately," was the reply, "I do not take as an authority."

"Very well," I said. "Let us appeal to the facts. They are 'chiels that winna ding.' Does Apostolic succession mean that when a bishop, in your sense of the term, lays his hands upon the head of a candidate for the ministry, a secret, subtle, spiritual endowment passes from the ordaining official into the personality of the man called to the work of the Master?"

"I suppose practically it comes to that," he replied.

"Well, then," I asked, "do you not admit that some men so ordained prove themselves to be inefficient, not to say unworthy? We owe too much to some of your men,

such as Westcott, Alford, Lightfoot, Church, and many others, not to have a high respect and veneration for your ministry; but still I am sure you will admit that things are as I have said. Neither will you deny that some men, such as Spurgeon, Maclaren, Dale, and Livingstone, who never had the hand of a 'bishop' laid upon them, have proved themselves, in the estimation of Christian believers, to be princes in Israel."

"I would be a bigot to deny the facts you mention, but I hold my theory all the same," was the answer; and it did not encourage much further "church building"—on such lines.

Several years later I was in a vessel sailing from Glasgow for the other side of the Atlantic, where I had to read a paper at an International Congregational Council in Boston. In the same ship were a number of Presbyterian ministers going to a similar convention of their own in Philadelphia. We all sat at the same table: there was no "apostolic succession" drawing us apart: and the Christian brotherhood which linked us to each other had full justice done to it. Amongst others sitting beside us was Principal Stewart of St. Mary's, St. Andrews, and on the return voyage Dr. Marshall Lang, then of Glasgow; and with such men we did not feel that we needed anything which a "bishop" could confer upon us.

I once heard Dr. David Brown of Aberdeen make the shrewd observation that it was the weakness and sin of denominations to minimise their own defects and magnify those of their neighbours; but that was not done while we were together.

Still we were not allowed to escape all trouble in our out-going voyage. We met an iceberg, and once is quite enough for such a meeting!

As we were nearing the other side of the ocean we were overtaken by dense fogs, and we knew from the lowered temperature of the sea that we were in the neighbourhood of ice. We were sounding the fog-horn, and going at a very slow rate of speed, when a sudden *thud* came, as if we had knocked against something. I rushed out of the reading-room on deck, and there met my gaze, looming in the mist, a huge mass of ice floating by the side of the ship. We had come against the weak end of an iceberg, and happily, by the momentum of the ship, broke it, and it was the broken part I saw.

There was no panic. The captain went out on the bowsprit to ascertain the amount of damage done to the plates of the ship, to reassure the thousand passengers on board. Learning that nothing had happened to the ship to hinder it from taking us to New York, and having full confidence in the men who had us in charge, some of us thought that the best thing we could do was to cease spending time talking about the accident, and, as the day was far advanced, commit ourselves to God and go to our berths. Some of us actually fell asleep amidst the mist, and the din of the fog-horn, and awoke in sunshine and serenity, bounding on towards our haven.

Of all my fellow-voyagers the one with whom I spent most time and had most pleasure was James Troup, minister of the Congregational Church, Helensburgh. He was an ideal companion for a sea trip. He had an unruffled restfulness, an unfailing good humour, an irrepressible preference for the sunny instead of the shady side of things. Above all, he was good to the core, and so natural and human in his goodness. Laughter was his chief relaxation. When in our cabin under an overbearing tempest, as we were crossing

the Gulf of Lyons, the ship was tossed about like a cockle-shell, and our bags and boots leaving their places were dancing about on the floor as if disposed to strike up a hornpipe. The only effect of all this uproar upon the occupant of the berth below was to fill him with uncontrollable merriment until tears came to his eyes. The "weaker brother" in the berth above, surveying the scene with a sickly smile, did his best to bring himself into sympathy with the rollicking mood, but it was hard work and the effort had its spasmodic interruptions!

Our passage was taken in a Cunard ship bound for the Mediterranean and Adriatic; we stopped where the ship did, and went ashore at ports when cargo had to be discharged or received. The ship was our floating hotel, where we slept, and had the most of our food.

Experience proved it to be an admirable arrangement. It had the advantage of an educational tour through the most interesting part of the world, in circumstances of comfort and restfulness; and daily exposure to sunshine and sea air for six weeks invigorated us and gave us a fresh start for work. In some respects the change marked a new epoch physically in my life.

Not long afterwards we were both sent by the committee of the Congregational Union to visit the island of Foula, which lies out in the Atlantic about 16 miles to the west of Walls in Shetland, and, next to St. Kilda, presents the most imposing cliff scenery to be seen in Scotland. We have had a preaching station there for the greater part of a century, and it needed special attention at that time.

Our specific work was soon over; but a storm arose, and we were detained upon the island for about a week. The

islanders were inclined to regard such rough weather as the intervention of a kindly Providence, as it gave them a Gospel meeting every night. Besides the deputies from the South, they had present James Fraser of Sullom and Lawrence Williamson of Raewick to give them a rare feast.

In proof of the kindly interest the natives took in their visitors, I may mention that I left my bedroom window open before going to bed, as I am accustomed to do, and when I awoke in the morning after the first night I found it closed. Protection against the elements is the main consideration on that exposed island, and as the wind and rain began to be aggressive during the night, my thoughtful host had climbed up to my window and shut it.

"The naked melancholy isles of farthest Thule" gave us of their best, and their best did us good. Persons who have no "call" to visit Shetland may rail at its bareness and "melancholy"; but those who have, are impressed with its unfailing and indescribable charm.

One of the sublimest scenes I ever beheld was when I looked over the brink down the rugged face of the Kame, in Foula. I stretched myself upon the scanty turf, as close to the edge as safety would permit, to see over—and looking down from upwards of 1000 feet what a stupendous almost overwhelming sight it was! It was like one of those scenes in which that daring French artist Doré allows his imagination to run riot—only it was real, all alive, and appealing to every sense and faculty of my nature. Myriads of all kinds of birds were peopling air, and sea, and crag; sitting on the ledges, or darting, whirling, and screaming

in the air as if they were in their element, but not quite at rest.

Down at the bottom of this awful abyss was the great Atlantic, unwearied but troubled, heaving its huge masses of water and dashing them upon the rocks with a roar that would have been deafening had it been nearer, just as it has done for thousands of years.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

TESTIMONY OF JAMES STARK, D.D.

GIVEN ON THE OCCASION OF HIS JUBILEE IN 1914

IN putting off my armour as a veteran, I cannot honestly say that I am conscious of those feelings of weariness and dejection which I at one time thought were the inevitable concomitants of the position I occupy to-night. I admit the many shadows: I am chilled by some of the clouds in the Church and the world; but I try to remember that what is essential to life is that divine Love which never fails to bring joy to whatever is, in a measure, responsive.

It is, I think, one of the healthy changes in Christian sentiment which I have noticed in a retrospect of fifty years, that believers do not now regard it as a necessary sign of piety to be impatient under the vicissitudes of the present tenure of existence; but are willing thankfully to accept it, with all its opportunities, as a stage in life which does for us what nothing else could do at present.

At the same time, I hope I shall never perpetrate the vain and heartless boast that I do not know what age is! The candle cannot give light without consuming itself. The "earthen vessel," as Paul describes the minister of Christ, on the physical side of his being is subject to the conditions of all earthly things, and, what is worse to bear in my position, you see so much more in the daily obituary list than you once did. Contemporaries are falling fast, the fellow-students and comrades of early years are dropping one by one from your side; a sense of comparative strangeness is coming over you as you walk abroad in the world; society is now like a great city whose principal statues have disappeared, leaving only empty niches and pedestals; and most of the houses you pass by are haunted with memories rather than peopled by friends.

But I trust God will give me grace to remember that I have to occupy till He come. My work in this world, in some form or another, is not to be done till my life here is done. I am retired from the pastorate but not from the ministry. It is said that a man

can be idle with impunity when he has reached my age. I hold that to be rank heresy. What right have you to put an arbitrary interdict upon your usefulness in this world that needs it so much? Is it not good, it is said, after a life of toil to vegetate? Yes, if you are a vegetable! It is the privilege of age to *choose* work, not to *abandon* it; to ring one's own bell, not to be rung in and out by others. And what a sweet privilege it is! What a blessed sense of independence and freedom it gives. It is the highest development of life. It is indeed a Jubilee to be yourself without let or hindrance, and to feel once more, as you did when you were a child, that all the world's before you and Providence is your guide.

There is no end to human ambition. Anselm, when he was between seventy and eighty years of age, desired to write a treatise on the origin of the human soul. I should like to try my hand upon a subject which, with all deference to that brilliant schoolman, would have been more within his reach—though not at all to his taste in his time:—the spiritual or evangelical unity of the Church: the Catholicity which comes not from adhesion to a hierarchy or guild, but through the operation of God's Spirit in a common Christian experience; the Communion of Saints through faith and love and united service. Choice spirits have been pining for such a blessed consummation for ages, and often have been working for it when they did not know.

The Church needs a return to the spirituality of primitive Christianity, and that means practically a simplicity and brotherly love which knows no pride. Large-minded men of quick discernment and fervid sympathy, true lovers of Jesus Christ, are beginning to feel that it is altogether intolerable that believers such as Fénelon and John Woolman, Columba and John Knox, Luther and Spurgeon, men who are one in a passionate devotion to Him who is "the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead," should have the minor things thrusting them apart from the union and fellowship of the major where the life and power lie.*

But I am departing from the text which you have assigned to me on this Jubilee occasion—Dr. Stark.

To begin then, this would certainly be a very ill-observed Jubilee, if I did not at the outset thank God for the almost unbroken health I

*The deeper minds as a rule are the broader ones, and recognise the unity amidst diversity. Dr. Hanna, in his biography of Dr. Chalmers, tells how that grand Christian warrior, in his grip of the essential, rose above the sectarian. His last sermon was preached in an "Independent Chapel," in Bristol.

have had during those fifty years. So far as secondary causes have to do with it I have to mention great power of sleep, a passion for God's pure air, and a hatred of all that pollutes it—such as tobacco-smoke and vile ventilation. My chief recreation has been abundant pedestrianism and change of scene. I have acted upon the principle that prevention is better than cure; and while I have not been off duty for more than two or three Sundays from sickness during those fifty years, I have always received a liberal holiday from the various churches I served.

It is time for me to thank you as an Association for doing me this honour, and for the kind words you have used in that beautiful address just read. Standing upon your platform and enumerating some of the chief sources of refreshment in my work, I cannot forget what I owe to the meetings of this Northern Association. Who could have known intimately and met at least twice a year John Murker of Banff, David Arthur and John Duncan of Aberdeen, Alex. Nicol of Rhynie, Robert Troup of Huntly, John Pillans, George Saunders, and James Rae—now all gone;—who could have had comradeship with such men without feeling that this fellowship has been indeed a means of grace to churches in a wide district, which might otherwise have suffered from isolation?

Dr. Brown too, who was to have taken an important part in this evening's proceedings, has suddenly joined the goodly company I have named, and the Association has lost a member who had a heart as steadfast as his intellect was acute.

Wm. Leslie and Wm. Macintosh of Belmont Church, Aberdeen, among the lay members of this Association, were good specimens of the men rural Independency could produce. I owe much to the example of strong and simple piety in the persons I met at the very outset of my ministry in Elgin, and my preaching station in Knockando—where there had been a Congregational Church for about half a century under the pastorate of Mr. Munro. Those men showed what the daily study of the Bible and prayer could do in making character, and, for their simple worth, were what Luther called "Amen Folk."

It gave me a further opportunity of studying the same strong spiritual type in other circumstances, when I was removed from the North to Edinburgh, in 1872. Augustine Church (Dr. Lindsay Alexander) had then a splendid and exceptional galaxy of men in its membership and diaconate, and as I was the first minister of Dalry Church, Edinburgh—which was their child—I had much to do with them. One of the greatest pleasures of memory is to think of those

men of high-toned character in the very heart of the world's activities, and in its high places, but unspoiled.

It was my respect for those Independents whom I met that gave me a start in the making of books. Although I edited the Scottish Congregational Magazine during the five years I was minister in Edinburgh, it was no part of the plan of my life to proceed further in the pursuit of literature. But when I was nearly 50 years of age, I was pressed to write the life of John Murker of Banff. That led to other books, such as "Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen" and "The Lights of the North," which went beyond the scope of our denomination, but not beyond the grand truth of which it was a particular illustration.

I am led now to the foundation truths of our religion, the momentous things of Revelation and faith, compared with which all denominational interests are as the small dust of the balance; and you will allow me to tell you what lengthened experience has to say regarding them. I, as it were, pass into the witness-box, and submit myself to your cross-examination. Considering what a critical and transitional period the last fifty years has been, a very natural question for you to put is:—"Stand you where you did when you were a young man as regards your belief in Jesus Christ?" My answer is emphatically "Yes," as indicating my continued adhesion to the choice I then made. Nothing has come within my horizon since then to surpass Him, and there are some things in life so necessary and essential that they cannot be set aside till something better of their kind is produced.

Discriminating between what Jesus Christ was to me then and what He is to me now, my second answer to your question is decidedly "No." I do not stand where I did when I was a young man in my estimate of Jesus Christ. How could I after fifty years' study, fifty years' contemplation of His character and experience of His love,—yes, and proof of His patience and forbearance? If three years did so much for the twelve disciples, should not fifty years have done something for me? My belief in Him, always unworthy of its object, has, on the whole, grown with my growth. The day is not at noon what it was at dawn. I took Him in youth: as the years rolled on He has taken me; and now I cannot do without Him, any more than the tree can do without its pith. By the grace of God, I am more sure of Jesus Christ to-day than I am of anything else. How did I gain that certitude? It is an open secret. Just as the Apostles did—by keeping company with Him. I have learned by experience that the words are literally true:—"He that cometh to

Me shall never hunger: he that believeth in Me shall never thirst." I have come to the end of my anxious quest: I need go no farther: I *can* go no farther, for there is nothing farther; I am at rest in Him. He is to me Emmanuel, the sure ground and living centre of the Eternal order.

I have read much: I have thought much during those stirring years. I have had my doubts; but I fought them. Like Amiel, as he shows us in that singularly pathetic journal of his, I have sometimes held the truth with a trembling hand; but I have held it. I have had my dark moods, more than the congregations I addressed ever knew; for I made it a principle in my ministerial life to "consume my own smoke," taking to heart one of the gleams of wisdom you find in Swedenborg—that the rods of the angels blossomed only as positive truth was affirmed.

I have my perplexities, even yet, and there are many questions which, as Bushnell puts it, I have "hung up"; but of this I am absolutely certain—after grappling with the subject from every possible stand-point, that if there be any truth and any reality in God's wide Universe, a historical Christ is the soul of that truth and the core of that reality.

Intellectually I feel that I could have no standing-ground as an unbeliever, for I should find it far more difficult to account for the myth than to accept the fact. There is mysterious grandeur in the fact, but no self-contradiction. The supernatural fact is staggering to the proud intellect; but it is to say the least of it self-consistent all through, of one piece, a glorious unity, though heaven and earth are in it.

Nothing astonishes me more than that Jesus Christ should remain a stranger to so many men. It has been the greatest disappointment and grief of my ministerial life that so many pass Him by with unresponsive hearts.

What is the explanation of it? Is it not in some cases because many have taken the gnostic instead of the Pentecostal line of approach? Jowett, the late master of Balliol, longed for the time when the Church would be free to give less time to critical work and more time to the saving work it was appointed to do. Although it is also true what he said—that when a man's mind is full of the simple truths of Christianity and the simple duties of the Christian life, he is not much affected by the strifes of parties and the controversies of the hour. It is by affirmation, not criticism, we live.

This leads me to meet your question:—Is your theology what it was when you were a young man?

There is a change in this respect. I am now less of a theologian, in the sense that I am less concerned and less positive about certain questions that have no evidently practical or immediate bearing upon the Way of Life. Like many others, I have shortened my working creed and tried to concentrate all available energy upon the things which chiefly matter, so far as our conscious action is concerned. Our forefathers were sometimes too sure about things which obtruded into the remote and mysterious domain where the divine and human wills meet. With few exceptions, we are all Calvinists and we are all Arminians now: Calvinists, as has been strikingly said, when we are upon our knees, and Arminians when we are upon our feet. Not that the change of itself brings a shallow grasp and a narrow range. It just means that what Luke calls the "things most surely believed among us," demand our supreme attention. Thomas à Kempis reminds us that "he to whom the Eternal Word speaks is delivered from a multitude of *opinions*." He does not belong to the category of persons whom Paul warns Timothy against:—"Ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth."

There is nothing in the world more practical than the Gospel. What is it to us if it is not experience? Christ came, not to take the lead in a discussion, but to give us Life. In doing that He honours our intelligence; but while the intellect has its rights, yet does not Pascal interpret the spirit of the New Testament aright when he says—God would rather move the will than the intellect? Man would often gladly content himself with speculation and talk—giving the play of thought and fancy, instead of the submission of the heart and will.

Bishop Ewing of the Isles hazards the suggestion that conversions might be more numerous if ministers of religion were *witnesses* as well as theologians.

Perhaps if we remembered more than we do that we are in the first place witnesses, it might have a corrective and quickening effect upon our theology. The theologian is apt to acquire a professional attitude, and be more of a Rabbi or Scribe than a witness.

So long as the witnessing is kept in view there will be a better prospect of a theology that is a faithful transcript of the teaching of Scripture, and at the same time a living, fresh, and flexible form of expression in the setting forth of the truth. The whole process is vital from beginning to end, when the practical object of witnessing is kept in the forefront.

The particular form of theology is to a certain extent a human thing; it is no more than the attempted intellectual grasp of the

sublime contents of revelation and different minds; and the same mind at different times may give a particular complexion to the mental outcome we call theology, while the testimony and message are substantially always the same. Theology, as a thing of the mind, is nearly allied to poetry in this respect, that in the one as well as in the other every age should catch, in a measure, its own accent. But, as no poetry can be permitted to ignore or outrage the beauty and glory of the creation which it professes to set forth, so no theologian should, so to speak, have an accent so peculiar that the voice of Eternity is not correctly heard nor its message faithfully conveyed.

A misplacement of the proportion of doctrine or the emphasis of the message, may lead to a false or ineffectual theology. Have we not to take our stand in the present day against that theology which makes much of Christ as a teacher and moral ideal, but says little of Him as a Saviour, and still less of the sin from which He came to save us? What good end is served by ignoring what is of supreme distinctive importance in Christianity? We cannot exalt Christ too much as a teacher and moral illuminator; but may we not make too little of those aspects of His being and work which alone can give effect to the visions and glories of what we call the Gospel? It is not by such "advancement" that the Church has won its triumphs and made its history. Prune the tree of doctrine of all superfluous dogmatism, but take care that you do not put the axe at the trunk or root of the tree itself. Remember that while the Sermon on the Mount is the glorious vision of Christianity, the Cross is its glorious dynamic. Who is there who can read and understand the Sermon without being driven in helplessness to the Cross?

I should be lacking in uprightness, if, when standing upon the watch-tower of my Jubilee, I did not utter my strong conviction that during a considerable part of those fifty years the glory of our Redeemer in His Cross has been shaded. Perhaps a measure of restlessness and negation was unavoidable in a transitional age; but was there not a needless exaggeration of the crisis in many cases? Men who have taken the vows of evangelists and pastors, and feel them, can never become mere debaters. Those are strong words of Bishop Westcott, but true:—"I feel more strongly than I dare express that it is this so-called Christian morality as 'the sum of the Gospel' which makes Christianity so powerless now."

Leaders of our Free Church, such as Dale and MacLaren, while loyal to their own age, were at the same time of a truly Catholic theology; and because they saw life steadily and saw it whole and

did not lose their heads and their feet, they were sometimes treated with a measure of impatience, as "old fashioned," by contemporaries who thought that in being influenced by your age you should be *led* by it, as if it were the sum total of wisdom.

I assume you to say in conclusion:—"On leaving us and bidding us Good-speed, what do you think is the great need of the Church at the present time?" The great need, to my mind, is the recognition of the fact that the kingdom of heaven, for the coming of which we daily pray, is yet to a large extent a strange thing in our world. The great danger besetting us in the present day is to take a Christ whom we are content to admire, but do not follow. How many there are who pay obeisance to Christ and yet take their own way, adhere to His cause and remain joined to their idols. Nothing suffers so much from the want of reality as religion. Surely spiritual sympathy should go before identification with a spiritual kingdom?

The central truth in the preaching of Christ and the Apostles was the essential and abiding distinction between the world that is and the kingdom from above that is to come. It was never contemplated that any one could pass from the one to the other without an inward change. It is the easiest thing in the world, where during two thousand years the "mustard seed" has become a great tree, to take the civilising influences Christianity sheds for the inward life of faith and love and joy it gives.

But environment is not experience. Christianity is not Christ (the term Christianity is not in the New Testament). It is the personal relation to Jesus Christ who is loved and enthroned in the heart that really constitutes a man a Christian. It is your sympathies held by the Highest. It is the helpless coming to the "Mighty to save." All short of that is not the branch abiding in the vine. It is no more than religion haunting you, rather than possessed by you.

I beseech you, therefore, to be on your guard against a vague, diffused Christian sentiment taking the place of clear, strong, personal convictions rooted in New Testament teaching. The veneer of civilisation will be of little avail when passion is up and temptation is strong. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

If it be so, you cannot face the facts which are about you without being convinced that, to a large extent, the words used regarding our Lord are still true:—"He came unto His own and His own received Him not." He is a stranger among many who bear His name in this so-called Christian land, an exile from hearts He died to gladden with the joy of heaven. "The course of this world," is a scriptural phrase which is yet, as you know, far from describing the triumphal

march of our Lord. We have still to press home the unacknowledged claims of Christ to personal devotion as the needed Saviour and absolute sovereign.

Let us rejoice that God has not left Himself without many witnesses all over the world; and let us ask ourselves, are we doing what we can by consistent witness-bearing? Friends, our day upon the earth, at the longest, will soon be done. What are we going to leave behind us, to succeeding generations, which will really make it worth while that we should have been here at all?

Parents, what are you going to pass on to those who follow you, as a thank-offering to God for His goodness to you while you were upon the earth? You may say—we are poor and have nothing of any consequence to leave. Is it so? Measuring the consequence of things in the scales of eternity, you may be assured that if you are at pains to open the eyes of your children to the excellency of Jesus Christ, that their hearts may be opened to His love, you are doing a thousand times more for your sons and daughters than if you made each one of them a millionaire.

COPY OF ADDRESS

PRESENTED TO THE REV. JAMES STARK, D.D.

DEAR BROTHER,

We, Ministers and Members of the Northern Association of Congregational Churches, desire, in this Jubilee Year of your ministerial life, to express our esteem for your Christian character and worth, and our appreciation of the many services you have rendered to the cause of Independency.

You have ever taken a warm interest in the work of our Denomination, and have rendered valuable aid in the administration of its affairs.

Occupying a prominent position as Pastor for many years in the City of Aberdeen, you not only commended yourself to your people by your cultured evangelical ministry, but at all times you showed a most praiseworthy sympathy with our country churches, and on very many occasions lent them the strong support of your counsel and encouragement.

Possessed of a conspicuous literary gift, you have, by your writings, done not a little to instruct and to console the wider Christian public, and to set forth attractively the lives of some who in earlier days were lights of Northern Congregationalism.

For the long period of fifty years you have nobly upheld and eloquently expounded the distinctive principles of our churches, while at the same time, you have manifested a most excellent spirit of brotherly co-operation with ministers and churches of other denominations.

We pray that the Heavenly Father may long spare you to attend our meetings, to aid us by your presence and ripe experience, and to further in every way the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ—so dear to your heart.

We are, in name of the Association,

HUGH ELDER, *Chairman.*
GEO. C. MILNE, *Secretary.*

ABERDEEN,
June 2nd, 1914.

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